



St. Croix Regional Family Health Center

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State of Maine | 131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Corinne A. LaPlant on behalf of St. Croix Regional Family Health Center
May 8, 2023

Supporting:

LD 1768 “An Act to Update the Alternative Base Year Payment Method for Federally Qualified Health Centers”

Sponsored by Representative Gattine

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Corinne A. LaPlant, Executive Director of St. Croix Regional Family Health Center, one of Maine’s 20 community health centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and part of the largest independent primary care network in the state.

St. Croix Regional Family Health Center (SCRFHC) has three services sites located in Princeton and Calais. SCRFHC served over 3500 patients in 2022. Our team delivers medical, behavioral, dental and MAT and substance use services to members of our community, regardless of their health insurance status or ability to pay.

We strongly support LD 1768 and thank Representative Gattine and the other cosponsors for bringing this important legislation forward.

We are extremely grateful to the Legislature for the passage of LD 1787 during the 130th Session (PL 2021, c. 747), which required a rate recalculation for FQHCs for the first time in over twenty years, and at a time when health centers were feeling the most profound effects of the COVID pandemic. Over the past few months, we have been working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services on the implementation and are close to completing that process.

I can personally attest that these rate increases will help bring greater payment equity to FQHCs at a time when it is needed most. We are in the process of expanding our facility in Princeton. The expansion of our current building is critical. The patient demand and SCRFHC staff are growing beyond the capacity of our current space. Construction of the 5,000 square-foot, two story addition will connect to the original building and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2024.

We’re excited to be investing in the health of our community and demonstrating our commitment to creating the best possible facility for delivering high quality services. This expansion project allows us to grow in a way that meets the needs of our patients and staff while giving them convenient access to primary, dental, behavioral and MAT services.

SCRFHC is a Federally Qualified Health Center and an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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The bottom line is that we cannot continue to operate without a framework for scheduled rate recalculations. It puts considerable undue burden on our health centers and staff and does not promote the quality of care we aspire to in Maine.

To avoid another delay in the future, this bill would require the Department to further update the base year of that alternative system no later than June 30, 2026, and every 3 years thereafter. MaineCare payments for FQHC services must be increased on a regular basis to reflect the current costs of providing services. This is the foundation for developing a value-based payment model for FQHCs and ensuring that there is capacity for the work that care transformation requires.

Simply put, this bill is necessary for the long-term viability of Maine's health care safety net and our FQHCs, who are leaders in delivering innovative and integrated primary care that Maine people need and deserve.

On behalf of St. Croix Regional Family Health Center, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at claplant@scrhc.org with any follow-up questions.