MaineHealth

**Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth
LD 1778, "An Act to Improve Health Care Affordability and Increase
Options for Comprehensive Coverage for Individuals and Small Businesses
in Maine"
January 11, 2022**

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of Section 1 of LD 1778, "An Act to Improve Health Care Affordability and Increase Options for Comprehensive Coverage for Individuals and Small Businesses in Maine."

MaineHealth is a non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire through its nine acute care hospitals, physician practices, lab, home health care services, and an integrated continuum of inpatient and community-based behavioral health services. Every day, MaineHealth's 22,000 care team members work tirelessly to support our vision of "Working together so our communities are the healthiest in America," by providing safe, high-quality care to the residents in our service area.

We believe that access to affordable, high quality health care is a fundamental element to meeting our vision, and it is for that reason that we support the legislation before you today. Though Maine's per capita spending on health care is the lowest in New England, our low per capita income still put pressure on Maine families and businesses. As both a health care system and private employer, MaineHealth experiences the pressure of cost from both of these perspectives. As a provider, we experience the anguish of families that struggle to pay for their prescription medications and we experience the rise in bad debt as they struggle to pay the cost sharing components of health plans that have increasingly higher deductibles. As an employer, we are challenged to balance providing raises for our care team members and offsetting the costs of health plan increases.

As a non-profit health care system whose mission ensures that we provide access to care for all in need regardless of insurance status or financial circumstances, we have concerns with policies that increase reliance on public payors at the at the expense of the private market. Therefore, we do not support a public option and would have concerns with Section 2.

As part of MaineHealth's commitment to improving affordability of health care while maintaining access to the high quality care, we look forward to working with the Office as it addresses affordability and increased coverage for individuals in Maine.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.