

MaineHealth

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community
Health Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Synernet
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth in Support of LD 1920,

“An Act to Enact the Interstate Counseling Compact to Address Inequities in Access to Clinical Counseling Services and Increase Maine's Provider Workforce”

Thursday, January 27, 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 LD 1920, “An Act to Enact the Interstate Counseling Compact to Address Inequities in Access to Clinical Counseling Services and Increase Maine's Provider Workforce.”

MaineHealth is an integrated 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. As part of our mission of “Working Together So Maine’s Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth, which includes Maine Behavioral Healthcare (MBH), is committed to creating a seamless system of behavioral health care across Maine, coordinating hospital psychiatric care with community-based treatment services, and better access to behavioral health care through integration with primary care services.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure timely access to behavioral health care services due to the ongoing workforce crisis and historically low reimbursement rates. Without sufficient access to community behavioral health services, like counseling, a greater demand is placed on more intensive levels of care. In fact, on any given day, up to half of MaineHealth emergency department (ED) beds are filled with patients awaiting behavioral health beds. And the length of stay for these patients is increasing and is, oftentimes, three to six times longer than those for medical patients.

MBH currently has over 200 openings, of which we are currently recruiting for over 20 Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors. The legislation before you today could help ease the challenges related to transferring licensure to Maine as we work to recruit out-of-state health care professionals to meet our growing need.

Legislative action is needed if we're going to be successful in meeting the increased workforce demands. It is imperative that we look at innovative programs and policy changes that support, attract and retain individuals new to the State in order to address this shortage.

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