

# MaineHealth

## MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community  
Health Network  
LincolnHealth  
MaineHealth Care At Home  
Maine Behavioral Healthcare  
Memorial Hospital  
Maine Medical Center  
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  
Mid Coast-Parkview Health  
New England Rehabilitation  
Hospital of Portland  
St. Mary's Health System

## Testimony of Cindy Wade, BSN, MHA

### President of LincolnHealth

### In Strong Support of LD 1791

### “An Act Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Provide Notice to Hospitals of Nursing Facility Closures”

February 15, 2022

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Cindy Wade, President of LincolnHealth, and I am here to testify on behalf of MaineHealth in strong support of LD 1791, “An Act Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Provide Notice to Hospitals of Nursing Facility Closures.”

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 local health systems, including LincolnHealth. Our Critical Access Hospital provides the full spectrum of health services, including acute inpatient care, but our two campuses in Damariscotta and Boothbay Harbor also offer a full continuum of independent living, assisted living, memory (cognitive) care, and skilled and nursing facility level of care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put tremendous pressure on every aspect of our health care system, and has exacerbated a longstanding challenge related to our ability to move patients to the next appropriate level of care. I am in the unique position of seeing the impacts of this crisis both as a hospital administrator and as a long-term care provider. And I can say with certainty that I have never seen anything like this.

In the recent weeks and months, the MaineHealth system has averaged over 100 patients awaiting discharge from the hospital to either a skilled nursing or long-term care facility. This bottleneck results in longer wait times in our emergency departments, delayed surgeries and procedures – and, most importantly, is not patient centered care, as individuals are not being cared for in the appropriate setting.

And our long-term care providers are not at fault – they have reached a breaking point due to chronic underpayment, an exacerbated workforce crisis, decreased capacity, and the clinical challenges related to providing care to a vulnerable population during a pandemic. From our perspective:

- In Fiscal Year 2021, we operated with a \$4 million shortfall, nearly \$2.7 million more than was budgeted;
- We are currently recruiting for 54 open positions, and our vacancy rate for CNAs is over 20% and for RNs is 36%;
- Due to the workforce crisis, our occupancy rate at our nursing facilities ranges from 21% to 28% behind where we were prior to the pandemic;
- We currently have almost 115 people awaiting a bed at one of our facilities.

Due to these challenges, three long-term care facilities have recently closed in our area. Each time, we have learned about their closures either in the media or because family members of the displaced residents have called us in tears asking if we have a bed available in one of our facilities.

The legislation before you today will not solve our current crisis, but the simple act of receiving advanced notice of a nursing home's impending closure will better prepare an impacted hospital in its discharge planning efforts, and we ask for your support.

The pandemic has illuminated how fragile our system of care is, and we look forward to working with you to ensure the system has the supports it needs to ensure our communities have access to high quality, affordable, and equitable care.

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