

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 2003, “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions”

Monday, March 7, 2022

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth. I am here today to testify in support of LD 2003, “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions.”

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 ten local health systems. MaineHealth is also the state’s largest private employer with over 22,000 care team members, but we are facing significant workforce shortages. Despite having invested heavily in creative and innovative solutions to attract candidates, we currently have over 2,700 job openings across our health system. These open positions cover a broad spectrum of the healthcare workforce from entry-level, frontline allied health staff to physicians.

As we actively recruit for these open positions, including “traveler” nurses and CNAs to supplement staffing, lack of housing – and, more specifically, affordable housing and housing for families – is a deterrent from job seekers accepting our competitive job offers. Unfortunately, it’s also not uncommon to have candidates accept our job offers and then are later forced to rescind the offer because they are unable to find affordable and available housing. In the summer months, these challenges are exacerbated for “travelers” whose commitment to MaineHealth can be several months, which does not allow them to lease an apartment, and forces these contracted temporary staff to compete for short-term housing in our state’s busy tourist season. Increased supply of affordable housing will support our ability to staff and deliver healthcare services; therefore, we support the goal of the legislation before you today to increase the availability of affordable housing throughout the state.

Our workforce crisis is multifaceted and includes issues such as a need to funnel significantly more individuals in the education pipeline, to provide more

affordable housing for families, to supply high-quality and affordable childcare, and to create access to reliable transportation. As we work to address the workforce crisis, we look forward to collaborating with the Legislature as it considers policy changes that support, attract and retain individuals new to the state. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.