



Leadership in Preventive Medicine Residency Program

To the Health and Human Services Committee:

April 3, 2019

I am writing to urge you to vote for LD 1277, an act to establish necessary qualifications for the Director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention within the Department of Health and Human Services, stipulating that the person in that role have both clinical background and public health training to cover issues related to the determinants of health (policy, community based, prevention, systems and research and quality).

My training is as a dual board certified Preventive Medicine and Public Health, and Family Medicine physician and I have a Master's degree in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. I have more than 20 years' experience here in Maine as a physician, an educator, and faculty of both our medical school and graduate medical resident physicians training program for many specialties (predominantly Family Medicine and Preventive Medicine). Four years ago, I became the director of the Maine Medical Center Leadership in Preventive Medicine Residency program, to train clinicians as experts in public health and population care. This training is exactly what the Maine CDC position should require – both clinical and public health expertise.

I have practiced a full spectrum of primary care in both outpatient and inpatient settings, and in both rural Belfast, Maine and more urban Portland, Maine. I have looked to the leader of the Maine CDC to fulfill its mission "to provide the leadership, expertise, information and tools to assure conditions in which all Maine people can be healthy". While clinical care is vitally important when a person has an illness, is in need of medical, surgical or mental health care, only one tenth of an individual's health is directly related to the clinical care they receive. The public health approach informs us how to work at a community, legislative and system level to have even greater impact on people's health.

Maine is facing crises of public and clinical health with the epidemic of opioid overdose deaths, the rise of childhood obesity, the aging of our population, and a lack of resources to fulfill the social needs of our neighbors with a rise in diabetes and heart disease rates. Physicians trained in public health will help the state be effective and focused on prevention, systems solutions and eliminating root causes of disease, while being able to understand the clinical systems that provide the care for these conditions. Maine has the physicians with the expertise, we have professionals with the commitment to Maine, and with this credentialing requirement, we will assure the Maine CDC is able to bridge the clinical and public health arenas in leading toward greater health. Certainly expecting this training for our chief health officer in our state is not too high a standard.

Please vote for improving our public health infrastructure by assuring the Maine CDC is led by a professional with training in both the clinical and public health sciences of population health.

Sincerely,

Christina Holt, MD, MSc

Board Certified Family Medicine, Board Certified General Preventive Medicine and Public Health
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