

# MaineHealth

## MaineHealth Member Organizations:

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 Sarah Calder, MaineHealth

In Support of L.D. 520, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Increase Rural Maine's Access to Broadband Internet Service

January 10, 2018

Senator Hamper, Representative Gattine and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am Sarah Calder and I'm the Director of Government Affairs for MaineHealth, which is Maine's largest 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 MaineHealth's mission of "Working Together So Maine's Communities are the Healthiest in America," I am here today in strong support of L.D. 520 because it will help increase access to healthcare for rural Mainers by removing broadband barriers that are limiting the use of telehealth.

One of the greatest healthcare challenges facing the healthcare industry is how to deliver effective and cost-efficient care to people with serious chronic illness. In 2012, 117 million people, representing almost half of all adults in the United States, had one or more chronic health conditions. Maine ranks fourth nationwide for deaths caused by the chronic illnesses, costing about \$1.5 billion per year in health care costs. (*Maine Dept. of Health and Human Services, Cardiovascular Health and Diabetes Strategic Plan, 2011*).

In Maine, these healthcare challenges are compounded by having the oldest population in the nation, the state's rural landscape, and its high levels of poverty. Elders, particularly those in rural areas, have the least access to transportation and are most in need of home health monitoring to manage their chronic health conditions and avoid the expense and emotional upset of hospitalizations, emergent care, and premature placement in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Telehealth, however, can help deliver the needed care

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and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations – if the necessary broadband infrastructure is available.

For example, MaineHealth Care at Home (MHCAH) has incorporated telehealth as a method to expand access to care across a large and predominantly rural service area that encompasses over 5,800 square miles and is comprised of 89,000 elders. From 2007 through 2013, MHCAH deployed telehealth to thousands of patients throughout its service area with a predominant focus on patients with advanced chronic disease. These patients enrolled with telehealth services demonstrated lower rates of emergent care, improved ability to manage medications, and were more likely to remain independent at home following discharge from services. During this period, re-hospitalization rates of patients enrolled in telehealth augmented with skilled home health services ranged each quarter from 7% - 10% when compared to rates of 18% - 20% for patients receiving only traditional home health care services.

The success stories of telehealth are numerous, but Maine's lack of or limited broadband internet service is preventing the technology from being used in the areas of the state that are most in need of increased access to healthcare. With that said, I strongly urge you to support L.D. 520, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Increase Rural Maine's Access to Broadband Internet Service.

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