

September 23rd, 2024

To the Members of the Maine Office of Affordable Health Care,

My name is Dr. Deborah Patten, and I am a pediatrician with nearly 40 years of experience providing care to children and families, mostly in our state, my home state. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of making health care more affordable for families. As someone who worked on the front lines of pediatric health care, I saw daily how the cost of care impacts not only children's health outcomes but the overall wellbeing of families across Maine.

Affordable health care is not just a financial issue—it is a public health necessity. When families cannot afford medical care, they often delay or forgo important preventative services, like routine check-ups and vaccinations. These preventative measures are critical for children, as they help identify and address health concerns early, before they become more serious and costly to treat. When children do not receive timely care, many common conditions like asthma, diabetes, or even common infections can spiral into emergencies, resulting in hospitalizations and occasionally deaths that could have been prevented.

One story that sticks with me is of a family I've cared for in my community of Bath/Brunswick. The hardworking parents with two good jobs brought their only child to the office after a delay, as they were worried about finances. Their daughter was having significant trouble breathing, and after I had stabilized her breathing, I prescribed a recommended inhaler to continue treatment at home. They were very reluctant to fill the prescription, because their health insurance plan included a \$30,000 deductible.

Unfortunately, many families across Maine face similar decisions every day. For families like the one I mentioned, affordable health care is the key to ensuring their children can grow up healthy, stay in school, and thrive in their communities.

As a pediatrician, I saw firsthand how comprehensive, affordable health care can transform lives. When families have access to affordable health coverage, they are more likely to seek care early, adhere to prescribed treatments, and participate in wellness visits that keep their children healthy. This has long-term benefits, not only for individual families but for our entire state, as healthy children grow into healthy, productive adults.

I urge you to consider the stories of the families in our state who are struggling under the burden of high health care costs. By making health care more affordable, we can reduce the strain on families, improve children's health outcomes, and create a healthier, more resilient Maine.

Thank you for your time and for considering the needs of Maine's children and families as you deliberate on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Patten, MD FAAP  
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