

I believe that a simple-single payer system—publicly funded, privately delivered universal health care—would be the best solution to much of what ails our health-care system. I recently published a letter to the editor of the Bangor Daily News expressing some of my views and emphasizing the advantages to institutional care providers, and I submit that letter here as my testimony.

Letter: Single payer could help health system woes

by Opinion Contributor August 21, 2024

It was saddening to read of the financial difficulties Northern Light Health is having and to learn that services many depend on might be curtailed. As an advocate for universal health care, I can't help wondering whether a simple, single-payer system might provide some financial stability to institutions like Northern Light.

The most familiar single-payer plan is U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders' Medicare for All Act. Under this plan, the government (the single payer) would fund institutions like hospitals according to a global budget negotiated each year based on the prior year's experience. The advantage to the hospital would be certainty on the revenue side. Cost projections, of course, would have less certainty, so there would have to be provisions for dealing with unexpected cost overruns.

A single-payer plan ought to reduce administrative costs significantly. (It is estimated that 30 cents of every health care dollar goes to administrative overhead.) There would no longer be separate billing for individual hospital stays or emergency room visits. It would be unnecessary to itemize every bandage and catheter. Surprise bills and facility fees, the source of much angry complaining, would be a thing of the past.

Many studies have shown that a single-payer system would significantly reduce the national health care expenditure, and the many advantages to the consumer are widely appreciated. But there have been few studies to quantify the benefits to providers. Such studies would be of great value as we debate the health care reforms we so desperately need.

Michael P. Bacon

Westbrook