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COMMENTS OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
TO THE
MAINE OFFICE OF AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

Second Annual Public Hearing
Department of Health & Human Services
109 Capitol Street, Augusta, Maine
Wednesday, September 25, 2024, 1:00 p.m.

Good Afternoon Executive Director Garrett-Reed and interested parties. I am Patty Locuratolo Hymanson, MD, Fellow of the American Academy of Neurology, living in York, past neurologist in private practice on the Seacoast for 30 years, Maine State Representative from 2015 to 2022, past Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, member of the Appropriations Committee, among other public service positions, including past Chair of both the Board of Trustees at Portsmouth Regional Hospital and our regional Federally Qualified Health Center and now, board member of York County Community Action Corporation which is the York County CAP and FQHC.

I am a member of the MMA's Ad Hoc Steering Committee on Health System Reform which seeks to engage our members and the community of health care practitioners in the public discussion and debate about the future of our health care system. The MMA is a professional organization representing more than 4000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. Our mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people.

I am here to continue sharing with you the actions of the Maine Medical Association as we widen access to our Statement on Reform of the US Health Care System, https://www.mainemed.com/sites/default/files/content/statement_hcr_mma_board_adopted_6_7_23_FINAL.pdf, that the membership of MMA strongly endorsed one year ago. The Statement articulates how the current system costs too much, does not work well to keep people healthy because of layers of barriers to good care and is demoralizing for physicians. A giant of a physician, Dr Peabody, said in 1925, "The secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient." We physicians have trouble caring for many patients because the

system is broken in so many places.

Besides speaking out loud about the moral injury harming physicians that these barriers cause because we can not care for people the way we were trained and in the ways we feel morally bound, is not enough, we look for solutions.

At the recent MMA Annual Meeting, Jeanne Lambrew, now past-Commissioner of Health and Human Services here in Maine, spoke to us about health care reform. She said we could focus on fixing the gaps in the current overly complex system or we could focus on changing the system itself. But fixing the gaps creates ever more complexity and changing the system seems overwhelming in these complex political times and it would be a federal, not a state effort.

While the OAHF works through its mandates and guiding principles with cost lowering at the center, the MMA will continue to widen access to our State. While we advocate universal coverage, paying for our expensive system is crippling for our patients and demoralizing for us.

We have listening sessions at locations in Portland and Bangor soon, representation at the American Medical Association, discussions with the Governor's Office and physician legislators about bills for the 132nd Maine Legislature. We just produced an array of short videos to tell our patients' stories and our own. During the past year, we have written letters-to-the editor and opinion pieces in the major Maine publications.

I feel compelled to share with you a sense of my experience as a physician in our system. The MMA recognizes that our membership has differing opinions about our health care system, including its pros and cons. Our members have differing views on the solution to the problems and inequities of our current system. But, MMA believes strongly that our members must raise their voices as advocates for comprehensive reform in accordance with the principles outlined in this Statement.

171st Annual Session September 6-8, 2024
The Harborside Hotel & Marina, Bar Harbor, Me

Frank O. Stred Building | 30 Association Drive | PO Box 190 | Manchester, Maine 04351
TEL: 207-622-3374 | FAX: 207-622-3332 | www.mainemed.com