



Office of Affordable Health Care

Representative Meyer, Senator Ingwersen, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

As members of the Advisory Council on Affordable Health Care, we are directed by statute to provide feedback to the Office of Affordable Health Care on matters affecting the cost of health care in this State. The Advisory Council has met with the Office on a bi-monthly basis since June 2023 and it offers advice on a range of topics, including analytics, opportunities and challenges of stakeholders, and policy direction.

We believe the intent of the Legislature in creating the Office and this Council was to develop proposals for the Legislature that meaningfully improve the affordability of health care for Maine people. To that end, the Office began presenting data and research identifying the significant role that rising prices of health services play in exacerbating affordability challenges for Maine people early in the process, and they presented policy domains that included strategies to address prices in August of 2024. Since that time, the Office has led a number of conversations with the Council specific to policies that directly address prices.

Advisory Council members are concerned about the financial status of Maine hospitals and the considerations for access if facilities or services close. We also believe that the burden of health care costs on families and businesses in our state is untenable. This is a difficult challenge, and one the Office has approached thoughtfully in the design of the policy – principally by creating exceptions for critical access and distressed hospitals; increasing reimbursement for primary and behavioral health care services; and by including a provision to ease the burden of prior authorization on health care providers.

While members have varying opinions on specific elements of LD 2196, An Act to Lower Health Insurance Costs, Reduce Barriers to Health Care and Ensure Fair Prices for Health Care, we believe that the idea is worthy of consideration and discussion by policymakers. While we believe the specific cap levels, evaluation methodology, and implementation structure is something the Legislature should ultimately determine, we believe this proposal is worth consideration to address the urgent healthcare affordability crisis in Maine.

<i>Support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trevor Putnoky, Chair – representing purchasers of health care• Kate Ende, Vice Chair – representing health care consumer advocates• Dr. Richard Evans – representing interests of older residents• Amanda Burgess – representing health economics and research• Maureen Hensley-Quinn – representing health economics and research
<i>Oppose</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Katie Fullam-Harris – representing hospital interests• Randy Clark – representing health care management, finance, and administration
<i>Abstain</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kevin Lewis – representing health insurance interests
<i>Absent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Renee Fay-LeBlanc – representing health care workforce interests• Malory Shaughnessy – representing behavioral health care interests• Representative Anne Graham – representing primary care providers