Office of Affordable Healthcare Public Hearing September 27, 2023

Dear Ms. Garrett-Reid,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the availability of affordable, high quality healthcare in Maine.

I currently serve in the Maine Legislature on the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. I am a Board Certified General Internist who has practiced Primary Care Internal Medicine in private practice and a hospital based teaching practice. I also served as Director of Outpatient Clinics at Maine Medical Center where Residents and Fellows in training provide outpatient care to people who are uninsured and underinsured. I was the initial medical director of CarePartners, a program which provides donated physician and hospital care to uninsured patients.

In the legislature this year we heard testimony repeatedly from healthcare providers about the increasing burdens being placed on them to access coverage for care from patient's health insurance systems. In every example presented, the care being provided was well established evidence based care, yet companies were either denying care or delaying care and creating burdensome proprietary systems to be used to obtain the care. Many plans contain high deductibles or co-pays.  These systems have added immensely to the delay of care or patients choosing not to do care at all.  The surprising thing to me was hearing testimony from employer purchasers that suggested the added cost of care was due to physicians and other providers of care giving unnecessary care and not to the administrative hurdles created by insurers.

I recognize that we are dealing in a complex environment of federal and state systems and laws, in addition to the private for profit insurance and pharmaceutical systems. However, if we continue to lose primary care doctors to burnout we will lose one of the proven ways to reduce costs and keep our people healthy.

 I strongly support the positions put forward by the Maine Medical Association at this hearing and will do everything I can to help change the current dysfunctional system.

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