



## St. Croix Regional Family Health Center

136 Mill Street, Princeton, ME 04668

PH: 207-796-5503

FAX: 207-796-5528

[www.scrfhc.org](http://www.scrfhc.org)

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February 18, 2022

State of Maine | 130th Legislature

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

February 22, 2022

Testimony in Support of

**LD: 1787 “An Act To Improve the Quality and Affordability of Primary Health Care Provided by Federally Qualified Health Centers”**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I serve as Executive Director of St. Croix Regional Family Health Center a community health center serving constituents in Washington County. St. Croix Regional Family Health Center strongly supports LD 1787 and thanks Senators Claxton and Moore for bringing this bill forward.

St. Croix Regional Family Health Center has service sites in Princeton and Calais, with a sub-recipient health center located in Danforth. Our organization has provided care for over 3,500 patients in 2021. Our team delivers medical, behavioral, dental, and substance use services to members of our community, regardless of their health insurance status or ability to pay.

**LD: 1787 “An Act To Improve the Quality and Affordability of Primary Health Care Provided by Federally Qualified Health Centers”**, is a much-needed bill that addresses the concerns of Maine’s Community Health Center Network regarding plans by Maine DHHS to revise its payment method for primary care services. The current design will significantly reduce funding for many health centers, including ours, in the midst of the worst global health crisis in modern times.

To preserve the advanced primary care model pioneered by Maine CHCs, MaineCare payments for those services must be increased to reflect the current costs of providing services before the Department establishes an alternative payment model for CHCs.

- The current MaineCare reimbursement rates for services delivered by CHCs are based on costs of providing services 20 years ago.

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[SCRFHC is a Federally Qualified Health Center and an equal opportunity provider and employer.](http://www.scrfhc.org)



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- Rates have not been adjusted to keep pace with increases in the costs, intensity and scope of services offered.
  - A solution to this problem does exist and has been implemented for another type of primary care provider in Maine. In 2019, outdated service rates for rural health clinics (RHCs) were rebased. The same kind of adjustment is crucial for the continued success of CHCs.

During 2021, St. Croix Regional Health Center provided \$206,000 of discounted services to the people in our community. We have provided services to people living at 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for as little as \$20. With the proposed changes in MaineCare reimbursement and expected loss of income, it will be necessary to reevaluate our ability to provide services at this cost. Forcing CHCs to raise the nominal fee of a visit will have a detrimental impact on an already vulnerable population. Unfortunately, PC Plus, as currently propose, will undermine, not advance, the important priority of advancing health equity.

To meet the needs of the community during the national COVID pandemic, St. Croix Regional Family Health Center, along with the other CHCs, has been called upon to provide testing, vaccinations and distribute supplies. The CHCs have answered this call, without monies for additional staffing, but it came at great cost to our health center. To have the staff available to serve the community, we have had to outsource many positions. We have outsourced our referral department, our medical records and the prior authorizations required by insurance companies for needed testing and medications. St. Croix's cost of outsourcing these departments will top \$300,000 in 2022.

Community health centers, one of the few health care providers in Maine that have not received any pandemic relief from the state, exist as a fragile safety net in the best of times, while serving at the forefront of integrated primary care. LD 1787 would help maintain access to health care for Maine's most rural and underserved communities.

On behalf of St. Croix Regional Family Health Center, thank you for considering our comments in support of LD 1787. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any follow up questions.

Sincerely,

Corinne A. LaPlant  
Executive Director

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