



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
An Act to Support Universal Health Care
May 12, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rev. Jane Field. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches (and a constituent of Senator Sanborn's). The Council has seven member-denominations who represent 437 local churches with 55,000 parishioners across the state. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 1045**.

As an organization whose members are rooted in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and committed to creating a culture of justice, compassion and peace, the Maine Council of Churches affirms that, in a just society, all people are entitled to full access to health care. We reject as contrary to our understanding of the gospel the notion of differing standards of health care for people based on their ability (or inability) to pay.

All seven of our member denominations have issued indictments of the morality of the current U.S. system where medical decisions are often made with primary consideration for the costs to insurance corporations, not for the optimum health of the patient. Competition for premium dollars and concern for high profits have taken priority over necessary care at actual cost. There is evidence that private insurance companies are prone to deny claims while continuing to receive premiums, favoring higher profit over the health and wholeness of the weakened, the worried, and the sick. It is immoral, in our view, that in the United States, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, aggregate annual profits in the healthcare industry total in the tens of billions of dollars, even as tens of thousands of Americans are forced into bankruptcy and homelessness each year because of medical expenses.

We at the Maine Council of Churches believe that universal healthcare is more aligned with our faith's values than the current system because the scriptures we are rooted in urge us to "look out for the interests of others," "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," "love your neighbor as yourself," "carry each other's burdens," and "defend the rights of the poor."

Based on our belief that health care is not only a basic human NEED but also a basic human RIGHT and our belief that it is a moral imperative to transform health care so that it is inclusive, accessible, affordable and accountable, we call upon Maine's legislators to vote to provide universal health care coverage to all residents of this State in a way similar to proposed legislation being considered in Minnesota.

The World Health Organization ranks the United States 37th in the world in health care outcomes although we spend nearly twice as much as any other country—enough to cover everybody living within our borders with excellent comprehensive health care. Other countries such as Sweden, Germany, and Denmark that have universal health care have better quality healthcare systems with better patient outcomes and higher longevity than ours. The system can and does work in those places. It could work here, too.

We urge you to vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1045.