

Twenty-seven Organizations Present at Listening Session with Senator Snowe

The Maine Medical Association was pleased to co-host a successful "Listening Session" with Maine's Senior Senator Olympia J. Snowe on April 7. Twenty-seven organizations representing health professionals, consumers, hospitals, employers, health plans and government presented their respective ideas on health system reform to the Senator who is on the influential Senate Finance Committee which will begin hearings soon.

Jo Linder, M.D., Chair of MMA's Executive Committee, presented the Association's testimony which can be viewed on in its entirety on the MMA website at www.mainemed.com. Noted in MMA's statement was the need for better support for primary care, coverage for the uninsured, and MMA's support for an individual health insurance mandate. MMA first proposed a mandate for persons to purchase coverage, with appropriate subsidies for those persons unable to afford coverage, in its White Paper on Health System Reform in 2003.

A second "Listening Session" with Senator Snowe was held in Bangor on Wednesday, April 8. At the Bangor event, MMA President Stephanie Lash, M.D. presented MMA's testimony.

Both events were covered extensively by the media. The Portland session was moderated by MMA EVP Gordon Smith and Mary Mayhew, Vice President for Governmental Affairs for the Maine Hospital Association.

Senator Snowe is expected to be a major player in the Congressional debate over health care reform. Accompanying her at the sessions were her chief health staffer, William Pewen, PhD, MPH. Dr. Pewen has been with the Senator's staff for six years and was recently named by Roll Call magazine one of the ten most influential health staffers on capital hill.