

Twenty-eight Organizations Present at MMA/MHA "Listening Session" with Chellie Pingree

Twenty-eight organizations representing a wide variety of stakeholder interests in the current health system reform debate participated in the Maine Medical Association/Maine Hospital Association "Listening Session" with First District Congresswoman Chellie Pingree held on Thursday, July 2 at the MMA offices in the Frank O. Stred Building in Manchester. As the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to vote on a comprehensive health reform proposal by August 1, the event was very timely and gave many organizations in the state an opportunity to share their organizations current thoughts on where the reform proposals should focus.

Congresswoman Pingree, accompanied by her health staffer in the D.C. office, Jennifer Taylor, offered remarks following the presentations and thanked the participants. She noted that it would be unlikely that a similar event with such wide participation and polite discourse could take place in any other state in the country. And despite a disparate group of interests ranging from small business advocates to consumer interests and state office holders, virtually all presenters noted the need for change and unhappiness with the status quo. The necessity to develop a health care system that provides some type of coverage, public or private, to all Americans was a universal theme. Beyond that, different groups supported or opposed the need for a "public option" to compete with the private health plans, and the issues surrounding an employer or individual mandate were presented.

Maine's Superintendent of Insurance Mila Koffman, J.D. expressed her personal support for a public option and discussed her previous experience as a regulator with the federal Department of Labor in Washington and as a student of health insurance models at Georgetown University.

Several physicians attended the session either as presenters or guests, including Jo Linder, M.D., representing MMA as Chair of the MMA Executive Committee, Elisabeth Mock, M.D. and Minda Gold, M.D. representing the Maine Academy of Family Physicians, Christopher Cary representing the Maine Society of Anesthesiology and Spectrum Medical Group, Josh Cutler, M.D., representing the Maine Quality Forum, Lisa Letourneau, M.D., MPH, representing Quality Counts, Mark Batista, M.D., J.D. representing Medical Care Development, Barbara Crowley, M.D. representing Maine General Medical Center and State Representative Linda Sanborn, M.D.

The event was hosted by Gordon Smith of MMA and Steve Michaud, President of the Maine Hospital Association.

MMA continues its work on national health system reform next week when the MMA Executive Committee will consider a position on the "public option". Members wishing to weigh in on this issue may communicate comments/thoughts to EVP Gordon Smith at gsmith@mainemed.com.