

## **DRAFT**

### Remarks for “Maine Can Do Better Press Conference”

Good afternoon. My name is Lani Graham, I am a Family Practice Physician with special training in Psychiatry and Public Health. I am here representing the Maine Medical Association and Physician for Social Responsibility in support of the need to raise revenues in the context of the on-going elimination of essential services for Maine’s most vulnerable people.

At present I work as a consultant and provide both public health services and direct care. Among other things I have been working as a consultant for Aroostook Mental Health Centers in Presque Isle and Caribou on a monthly basis. In that capacity I have been serving some of the most vulnerable people in the state, those with mental illness who are also desperately poor. I have patients who live with their whole families in two rooms or in a trailer. I see people who are ill themselves with conditions like schizophrenia or severe depression and are simultaneously trying to take care of family member in the end stages of cancer. They are my heroes. I have been constantly inspired by their courage and determination to make lives for themselves and those they love. Even those who are disabled talk to me about wanting to work, especially now.

But I have also been deeply discouraged by the challenges they face and the needs that are going unmet among that population right now. Doses of medications they skip because they have to choose between heat for the house, food or medication. People who have trouble scraping together the co-pay for a health care visit, but can’t get there because they have no transportation. I dread to think of what may happen should services be further curtailed. I have been proud of my state in the past because we have been generous in supporting these vulnerable people. We have taken the position that Maine is a big community and that we can and should help our neighbor who is down and out. But now, in one of the darkest hours since the great depression of the 1930’s Maine appears ready to turn its back on the very policy that has made us strong. We certainly understand that there must be painful cuts, but we believe that Maine should do as we have in

the past and as other states are now doing, namely consider reasonable sources of revenue. The majority of states from Alaska to Georgia and from California to Kentucky are looking to offset the pain of deep cuts by raising revenue. We are here to today to ask the Maine Legislature and our Governor to join them and remain true to our history when our people need that concern most. Thank you very much.