



# MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of David B. McDermott, MD, MPH  
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
With respect to LD 1671, "The Supplemental Budget"  
11 January 2010

Senator Diamond, Representative Cain, Senator Brannigan, Representative Perry and members of the committees, I am Doctor David McDermott from Dover-Foxcroft. I speak today as President of the Maine Medical Association. The MMA is a voluntary professional association representing the interests of over 3300 physicians, students, residents and fellows in Maine and the patients that they serve. I am also the director of Emergency Services at Mayo Regional Hospital, a critical access hospital in Dover-Foxcroft where I see patients presenting for Emergency care.

The MMA appreciates the work you have done to preserve the planned increase in the physician fee schedule payments. This is an important part of the long-term strategy Maine must continue in order to recruit and retain physicians to serve her people. However, even with these increases, we have to remember that the reimbursements offered under the MaineCare program fall short of covering the expenses associated with providing those services.

This shortage has driven a growing number of physicians to turn to hospital employment as a means of remaining active in practice in Maine. Cuts such as those proposed to the hospital reimbursements, particularly critical access hospitals, threaten the ability of those hospitals to support the physician practices that have become the safety net for physician access in nearly every community in Maine. While employed physicians are salaried and may not be immediately affected by the cuts, the sustainability of this model to meet care demands requires solvent hospitals. I urge you to look at the real impacts in our communities that the cuts you are making to our hospitals will have as they threaten the ability of those hospitals to support the range of community health services they provide now, and take away critical resources that are needed to invest in electronic health records and new models of care such as the patient centered medical home.

Speaking as an Emergency Physician I am very worried about the cuts to mental health and substance abuse services and the randomly chosen limits on outpatient care visits. The proposed changes will gut the core of community-based mental health services. At Mayo Regional Hospital alone this would end up cutting reimbursement for these by fifty percent. The resulting loss of services would leave no significant presence of these services in all of Piscataquis County. I expect that a flood of destabilized patients will now be seeking emergency care at a time when essential funding for crisis programs has been decreased. Furthermore: when physicians and health systems recognize that necessary outpatient testing is not going to be covered due to numerical limits on visits it will be very easy for them to direct those non-emergent patients to the Emergency Department for care which is exempted from restrictions. We don't have the capacity in the Emergency Departments in Maine to handle this surge.

Thank you for your time today. I'd be happy to answer any questions now or at a later time.

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