



MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Maine Physicians Respond to U.S. Supreme Court Decision Upholding Affordable Care Act - Statement by Maine Medical Association President Nancy Cummings, MD

Contact: Nancy Cummings, MD
President, Maine Medical Association
Orthopedic Surgeon, Farmington, ME
207-778-9001 (office)

Dieter Kreckel, MD
President-Elect, Maine Medical Association
Family Physician, Rumford, ME
207-369-0146 (office)

Gordon Smith, Esq.
Executive Vice President, Maine Medical Association
207-622-3374 x 212 (office)
207-215-7461 (cell)
gsmith@mainemed.com

Andrew MacLean, Esq.
Deputy Executive Vice President, Maine Medical Association
207-622-3374 x 214 (office)
207-215-7462 (cell)
amaclean@mainemed.com

Jessa Barnard, Esq.
Associate General Counsel, Maine Medical Association
207-622-3374 x 211 (office)
207-462-5713 (cell)
jbarnard@mainemed.com

Manchester, Maine, June 28, 2012- Doctors in Maine practice in all corners of the state and work on all parts of your body. We may come from across the country or across the world, and we don't all share political or ideological views. However, one thing we do agree on is that Maine doctors need the tools and resources to take care of any sick patient that comes into our office and that we all need to do more to keep people well in the first place.

Whether you call it the Affordable Care Act, the ACA or ObamaCare, the health care reform law passed by Congress in 2010 is a once-in-a-generation attempt to change the U.S. health system to do these things better. We are pleased to see that the Supreme Court has made the right decision and left virtually all of the law standing so we can move forward and take advantage of the best these reforms have to offer to our practices and patients.

We all know that the current health care system is struggling and is financially unsustainable. While doctors and hospitals in Maine do our best to provide free and low cost care, many hard working Maine people lack any health insurance and just can't get in the door. For those who do have insurance we know it often costs far too much to take care of them once they're sick. While the ACA is not a panacea it has already helped hundreds of thousands of Maine residents afford and access health care and will continue to make major improvements to our health care system.

What has it already done?

- 226,000 people in Maine with private health insurance gained preventive service coverage with no cost-sharing
- 187,251 people with Medicare in Maine received free preventive services or a free annual wellness visit with their doctor.
- Almost 12,000 people with Medicare received discounts on brand-name prescription drugs when they hit the donut hole in 2011
- As of June 2011, over 7,000 young adults in Maine gained private insurance coverage through their parents' health plans.
- Since 2010, Maine has received \$10 million in grants from the Prevention and Public Health Fund created by the Affordable Care Act. This new fund was created to support effective policies in Maine, its communities, and nationwide so that all Americans can lead longer, more productive lives.
- Just two months ago, a new consumer operated and oriented health plan was authorized in the state and given the ability to borrow \$55 million from the federal government.

The most significant improvements come in 2014 when thousands of people in Maine will gain insurance coverage through private health insurance exchanges and a MaineCare expansion (paid for largely by the federal government). We can only have a rational health care system and seriously address the issues of cost when all people, healthy and sick, young and old, participate in our health insurance system and have access to care. The reforms also include many unsung improvements, such as beginning to pay for health care based on the quality of care and not just the number of services provided, funding research to identify the most effective treatments, providing incentives to practice primary care (including increasing Medicaid payments to primary care physicians to Medicare levels for 2013 and 2014), and encouraging coordination of care.

We are very pleased with the Court's reasoning and affirmation that virtually all of the ACA is constitutional. It is now time for the Maine legislature to come to the table to work with Maine people and health care professionals to chart a path for implementing the ACA here in our state and ensuring that all Maine citizens have access to high quality, affordable care, including through establishing a robust health insurance exchange and expanding MaineCare coverage.

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The Maine Medical Association is a professional association representing more than 3500 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine citizens.