



MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Good morning. Thank you for joining us. My name is Amy Madden and I am a family physician practicing at Belgrade Community Health Center. I am also speaking today on behalf of the Maine Medical Association as the Chair of the Association's Legislative Committee.

The Health Center, like all of the federally qualified health centers in Maine, strives to provide high quality, affordable, patient-centered health care in a medically underserved area. Working in this unique, community setting has given me the privilege of addressing the health needs of my neighbors from birth through retirement and beyond.

I am speaking today to highlight just how critical it is to physicians in Maine that our state accept the federal funding that has been set aside to provide health insurance for approximately 69,500 hardworking, low income Mainers.

You will hear more from speakers who will tell you the details of how it makes financial sense for the state to accept these federal dollars. But physicians also know – and the evidence shows – that covering more people with health insurance not only saves money but is the right thing to do for the health of our residents. A recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* shows that those who are covered by Medicaid are:

- 70 percent more likely to have a regular place of care and
- 55 percent more likely to have a regular doctor

We also know that expansions in Medicaid coverage are associated with an improvement in overall health status and a significant reduction in death rates.

As health care costs continue to rise for everyone, we need to ensure that people have access to primary care and seek preventive services before their health care needs become high cost emergencies or more difficult to treat. Maine has an opportunity to cover more people and save millions of dollars currently spent to treat uninsured people in emergency rooms. This coverage will decrease rates of charity care provided by hospitals in Maine and mean less shifting of costs to everyone with private health insurance.

For the past decade the Maine Medical Association has stated that coverage for all Mainers is essential due to improved access to preventive care and reducing the cost shifts to others with insurance. Accepting these federal funds to provide coverage for nearly 70,000 of our neighbors is a once in a lifetime opportunity that Maine cannot afford to turn down.

Thank you. I am pleased to introduce our next speaker.

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