Legislative Priorities for MaineHealth

- **The behavioral health system is in crisis:** Last year, 861 kids were stuck in hospital Emergency Departments for longer than two days. The average length of stay was 7 to 10 days depending on their needs.

  - Expand the “No Eject, No Reject” policy to ID/DD and children’s residential providers (Rep. Anne Graham)
    - This bill would require that residential treatment homes have an alternative residential placement before discharging a client, including State permission to do so; it also strengthens the ID/DD crisis system, and requires the State to develop a crisis system for children with behavioral health needs.

  - Require the State to set aside flexible funds to support the unique needs of certain individuals (LD 907 - Rep. Holly Stover)
    - This bill provides DHHS with flexible funds to support the unique needs of children and adults with behavioral health diagnoses, like additional in-home supports or enhanced staffing.

  - Require the State to develop a secure residential treatment facility for children (LD 181 - Sen. Russell Black)
    - Since 2018, DHHS has proposed creating a secure residential treatment facility for children. Funding was included in the FY ’23 Supplemental Budget. Without such a facility, children get stuck in more restrictive settings, like EDs or are sent out of state.

  - Develop a bundled rate to support individuals with Emotional Dysregulation Disorders (LD 840 - Rep. Colleen Madigan)
    - This bill creates a bundled rate to meet the needs of certain individuals with a diagnosed personality disorder or emotional dysregulation. This is modeled after a highly successful program that prevented hospitalizations and ED admissions, but was defunded by DHHS in 2020.

  - Expand Supported Employment Services to MaineCare adults with Serious Mental Illness (Rep. Sam Zager)
    - This bill would expand Supported Employment Services to any adult MaineCare client with Serious Mental Illness.

  - Expand the current MaineCare hospital payment for patients who cannot be discharged from a hospital to all patients awaiting any residential placement, including patients in the emergency room (LD 225 - Rep. Anne Perry)
    - Hospitals are not paid for the care provided to patients who are stuck in the hospital waiting for another appropriate placement.
• **Maine’s long-term care system is failing our most vulnerable:** Every day, MaineHealth has up to 100 patients awaiting discharge to the next appropriate level of care.
  - An Act to Improve Access to Appropriate Levels of Long Term Care in Maine (LD 1784 - Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross)
    - This bill would provide immediate financial relief to long-term care providers in an effort to restore the 278 beds that have closed in the past year and the 1,300 that are currently unstaffed.
  - Resolve, To Create a Blue Ribbon Commission to Make Recommendations to Update Maine’s Statutes and Regulations that Govern the Continuum of Long-Term Care Options in Maine (LD 1785 - Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross)
    - This bill would task a Commission with reviewing Maine’s statutes and regulations to identify barriers that limit the number of long-term care beds available to meet the needs of our rapidly aging population.

• **Across the nation and in Maine, we are facing a severe health care workforce shortage:** Currently, MaineHealth has over 800 RN vacancies.
  - Financial support to expand and retain the health care workforce (LD 1797 - President Troy Jackson)
    - This bill would provide additional funding to help address the health care workforce crisis.
  - Expand the current violence against health care workers statute to all hospital emergency department employees (LD 1119 - Sen. Rick Bennett)
    - This bill clarifies the current statute that makes it a Class C (felony) crime to commit an act of violence against a health care worker to include all care team members in hospital EDs.

• **Other Key Priorities:**
    - This bill protects providers by limiting the ability of carriers to initiate unilateral material mid-year policy changes, among other things.
  - Amend exceptions to the MaineCare hospital readmission penalty (LD 1104 - Rep. Jane Pringle)
    - This bill would provide an exception to the MaineCare readmission penalty for patients who leave against medical advice and for patients whose primary diagnosis is a manifestation of their Substance Use Disorder.
  - Mandate insurance coverage for male newborn circumcision, including MaineCare (LD 615 - Rep. Kelly Murphy)
    - This bill would require health plans and MaineCare cover male newborn circumcision as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

For more information, please contact: Katie Fullam Harris (207/232-6183) or Sarah Calder (207/560-7221)