Testimony Sarah Calder, MaineHealth
In Support of LD 982, “An Act to Allow the Disclosure of Death Certificate Data to Hospitals and Health Care Practitioners”
Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Sarah Calder, Senior Government Affairs Director at MaineHealth, and I am here to support LD 982, “An Act to Allow the Disclosure of Death Certificate Data to Hospitals and Health Care Practitioners.”

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a continuum of health care services to communities throughout Maine and New Hampshire. Every day, our over 22,000 care team members support our vision of “Working Together so Our Communities are the Healthiest in America” by providing a range of services from primary and specialty physician services to a continuum of behavioral health care services, community and tertiary hospital care, home health care and a lab.

As part of our commitment to patient safety, MaineHealth has undertaken a Zero Suicide platform for our system, which is a national quality-improvement suicide prevention model. This program is driven by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Joint Commission.

The Zero Suicide program is comprised of seven elements and each element involves quality improvement strategies to improve suicide care and reduce deaths. One of the elements is ensuring a health system has adequate data around suicide deaths involving their patients. Knowing this number allows the system to calculate their baseline rate so that when every quality improvement strategy is implemented, the system can know if the rate has improved and the strategy has been effective.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to access the death certificates of our patients who have died by suicide, and we have to rely on what families or outside sources inform us of, which is often incomplete. LD 982 would provide that access, and I urge your support.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.