**The Maine Heritage Policy Center**

**Testimony to Support LD 1974**

**“An Act To Promote Telehealth”**

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Adam Crepeau. I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1974.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center supports LD 1974 because it would expand the use of telehealth to case management services. The benefits of telehealth are abundant, but the most important roles of telehealth services are keeping individuals out of the hospital and providing care to rural areas of the state.

This bill would allow case management services delivered through telehealth to targeted populations to be reimbursed by MaineCare. These targeted populations include children with behavioral health disorders, developmental disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions. Adults are eligible if they have a developmental disability, substance abuse disorder and/or HIV.[[1]](#footnote-0) These populations would be well-served if case management services are to be covered by MaineCare.

Maine has some of the sparsest populated counties east of the Mississippi River. Aroostook County has just 11 people per square mile. Additionally, Piscataquis County is home to just four people per square mile. According to a December 2016 report, providers are reimbursed at a revised rate of $15.92 for every unit worked, which are broken down into 15 minute increments.[[2]](#footnote-1) This model assumes case managers travel 175 miles per week (the average) to perform their essential job functions.

Allowing providers to offer telehealth under Section 13 of MaineCare would likely lower costs due to saved mileage. More specifically, decreasing the volume of miles case managers drive per week would likely lower the cost in the rate model assumption. This would benefit case managers by saving them time to fit more clients into their schedules. It would also benefit taxpayers by decreasing overall costs.

For those reasons, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, “Ought to Pass” on LD 1974. Thank you.

1. <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/144/ch101/c2s013.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/reports/2017/BHandTCM.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)