



MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cover Maine Now! Coalition Expects Large Crowd to Show Support for Expanding Access to Health Care

AUGUSTA – A large crowd is expected for a public hearing on Wednesday for legislation that would expand access to health care for nearly 70,000 Mainers.

The Cover Maine Now! Coalition, which includes more than 90 organizations working together to promote accepting federal funds to expand access to health coverage for more Mainers, will have a significant presence at the scheduled public hearing for LD 1578, An Act to Increase Health Security by Expanding Federally Funded Health Care for Maine People.

“This is one of the most important initiatives the Legislature will consider this year,” said Sara Gagné-Holmes, executive director of Maine Equal Justice Partners and a leader of the Cover Maine Now! Coalition. “Lawmakers have an opportunity to save lives, create jobs and help our economy grow by expanding access to health care for thousands of Mainers.”

The hearing is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 15, and will be held in Room 209 of the Cross Building.

“Because Maine declined federal funds during the 2013 legislative session, tens of thousands of Mainers, many of whom are 50-64, have fallen into a ‘coverage gap,’” said Rich Livingston, AARP Maine volunteer state president. “They have no access to health coverage under Medicaid, and they do not qualify for subsidized coverage under the new health insurance exchanges. It is imperative that our elected leaders expand health care coverage for all hardworking Mainers in 2014.”

In addition to saving the state money and providing stability to Maine's hospitals, the expansion of health care would also improve care for Mainer's battling chronic and severe illness.

"People who receive health coverage through Medicaid have better access to health care than do the uninsured. They are more likely to receive lifesaving cancer screenings, they have better access to outpatient and hospital care and prescription drugs and if they get cancer, it is more likely to be discovered at an early stage," said Hilary Schneider, government relations director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. "Improving access to Medicaid coverage in Maine will save lives and reduce health care costs."

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For a full list of coalition members, visit: <http://www.covermainenow.com>

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