



MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

*Dieter Kreckel, MD President • Guy Raymond, MD President-Elect • Lisa Ryan, DO Chair, Board of Directors
Gordon H. Smith, Esq. Executive Vice President • Andrew B. MacLean, Esq. Deputy Executive Vice President*

Gordon Smith, Esq., Maine Medical Association

Good morning.

I am Gordon Smith of East Winthrop and I serve as Executive Vice President of the 160 year old Maine Medical Association (MMA). MMA is a professional association representing more than 3800 physicians, residents and medical students in Maine whose mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine and promote the health of all Maine citizens.

It was ten years ago, in 2003, that the Association released a White Paper on Health System Reform advocating for coverage for all Mainers noting that it was essential because of the link between access and receipt of preventive care and to reduce the significant cost shift onto others with commercial insurance.

Today, Maine has the unprecedented opportunity to bring health insurance coverage to nearly 70,00 additional Maine citizens, with the vast majority of the funding coming from the federal government -- 100% for the first three years (as long as we get started now) and no less than 90% thereafter.

Expanding access to these individuals utilizes the resources of the federal government, just as Maine did in the State Innovation Model grant announced earlier this year. And like the activities funded by the grant, expanding coverage with these federal dollars will allow the newly insured to benefit from many initiatives in the grant to improve care, decrease cost and improve patient experience. Given the substantial state and federal effort to transform the delivery and payment systems, why would we not want to impact as many Mainers as possible with these positive changes. We can't look at any of the big three: cost, access and quality, in isolation. It all goes together.

I understand the concerns of those who want to reject the federal dollars. I know their opposition is sincere and their concern about the cost of medical care in Maine is not misplaced. We have some of the highest costs in the nation and it is adversely impacting employers both large and small and it is hurting families and the state. But limiting access is not the answer to the cost

problem. Rather, when access is limited – which is exactly what we would be choosing to do if we let this opportunity pass us by – we do not eliminate the need for healthcare. We simply allow individuals and families to receive care they cannot afford and to then fall into debt and bankruptcy. And we continue to shift costs onto those who provide and have health insurance.

Maine physicians support enhanced access because they support the work of the Department of Human Services as described in the SIM grant. We believe that the new public health plan will deliver better care at lower cost and we want more Mainers to be able to benefit from the transformation of both the delivery and payment systems taking place over the next three years.

Now is the time to do this. We encourage legislators and the administration to work together to embrace what is so clearly the right thing to do.