

Testimony in support of LD 392: An Act to Fund Maine's School-based Health Centers and in support of LD 836: An Act to Expand Maine's School-based Health Centers

March 20, 2019

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Ronald Jarrett, and I am the Director of Public Policy & Advocacy at United Way of Greater Portland (UWGP). I am here today, on behalf of UWGP, to testify in support of LD 392: An Act to Fund Maine's School-based Health Centers and LD 836: An Act to Expand Maine's School-based Health Centers.

Thrive2027 is our community's commitment to make Cumberland County stronger for everyone who calls it home. Powered by UWGP, more than 225 business, non-profit, public, and community organizations have endorsed three 10-year goals that promise measurable and meaningful change in Greater Portland. These three goals ensure that:

- Goal 1: More children have a strong start in school so that they are reading at grade level by the end of third grade. By 2027, we aim to have 70% of children reading at grade level by the end of third grade; currently, only 56% of Cumberland County children read proficiently at the end of third grade.
- Goal 2: More people have the education and employment opportunities they need to be able to live and work in Greater Portland. By 2027, we aim to have 70% of households paying less than 30% of their income on housing; currently, only 15% of low-income households in Cumberland County pay less than 30% of their income on housing.
- Goal 3: More of our neighbors live longer, healthier lives. By 2027, we are aiming for a 10% reduction in preventable premature deaths.

In order to make sure that children are healthy and supported in school, we support policies that ensure they have access to quality health services onsite at schools that promote and support their health. In Portland this includes access to School-Based Health Centers (SBHC). These critical centers provide primary care services, including treatment of minor illness and management of chronic conditions, immunizations, reproductive health care, and behavioral health and psychiatric services. These services, specifically the mental health services, aid in the prevention of and response to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Preventing and treating ACEs is an important step towards ensuring that our neighbors live longer and healthier lives. LD 392 and LD 836 seek to strengthen School-based Health Centers, thereby ensuring youth have access to these services in a low barrier environment.

LD 392 and LD 836 support our efforts in both Goal 1 and Goal 3. Expanding access to quality basic health services ensures that more children are healthier and are supported in their educational environment. Additionally, expanding access to School-based Health Centers (SBHC's) allows more youth to receive mental health and substance use prevention and treatment services in the same environment where they spend the majority of their day.

LD 392 specifically provides ongoing funding (\$600,000) for the current 15 SBHCs across the state. According to Greater Portland Health, during the 2017-2018 school year, the four school-

based health center locations in Greater Portland (Casco Bay High School, Deering High School, King Middle School, and Portland High School) provided services during more than 2,588 student visits.ⁱ LD 836 builds off LD 392, seeking to double the number of these centers statewide.

As stated above, United Way of Greater Portland is supporting these bills because they align with Goal 2 and Goal 3, helping to mitigate ACEs and reduce preventable premature deaths. For these reasons, we respectfully encourage you to support LD 392 and LD 836.

Thank you for your leadership and service.

ⁱ <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=95746>