



Senator Rodney L. Whittemore
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Dear Chairman and members of the committee,

I am writing to you today to urge your support for H 2575. While I am aware that a letter from another state legislator may be relatively rare in our line of work, I feel this issue is important enough for me to reach out. From what I understand, the bill before you shares similar transparency principles to a law we passed with unanimous bipartisan support in Maine in 2017 when I served as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Insurance and Financial Services. *I have come to believe that the law we passed in Maine will be the most important piece of legislation I worked on during my time in office.*

As the owner of a small family-owned outdoor power equipment business, I know the terrible pain caused by having to choose between offering health insurance to employees and hiring them in the first place because of costs. And as a state Senator representing District 3 in Maine, I know that it's our duty to work to ensure that other small business owners do not have to make this difficult choice. It is not too strong to say the economic future of our respective states depend on their success. If we do not tackle health care costs, there is no doubt that we will be hurting workers in our states.

You will likely hear many reasons not to act on health reform from stakeholders—most of which we likely heard in Maine as well—but the interests of patients and our constituents must take precedence, as many of them are struggling to afford insurance or access to health care, even with insurance.

We must ask—are people healthier if they avoid care because they do not know the cost ahead of time? How will they be able to access care next year, or the year after, if we do not change the unsustainable status quo?

Health care costs are the single largest deduction from paychecks—and unfortunately, they continue to rise. Yet many past transparency efforts have missed the mark. Our bill took an important first step to combine individualized transparency with shared savings for patients, while protecting patient access to high-value providers. It is a workable method to tackle costs by engaging patients rather than a top-down “solution.”

I am pleased to report we have seen insurers roll out plans with transparency and shared savings one year ahead of schedule. I think we can all agree the solutions being offered in Washington, D.C. aren't working. But we need to try to solve the problems of our neighbors today. That is why the Maine Legislature wanted Right to Shop—we knew it would help the citizens of our state afford quality care that they need. It's our duty as state leaders to find solutions that work. I urge you to consider passing this necessary health care reform during the 2018 legislative session in your state.

Senator Rod Whittemore
District 3