

## CoffeeCAHC policy round-up:

July 3, 2025

**119th US Congress, 1st Session**

**132nd Maine Legislature, 1st Regular Session**

### Good morning, Coffee CAHC readers!

A lot is happening these days. We've been taking a few minutes to enjoy O.C. Smith's [La La Peace Song](#).

## Federal

### Reconciliation Bill Passes Senate

Tuesday, the US Senate [passed its version](#) of the massive reconciliation bill. The Senate version makes even more drastic cuts to Medicaid - \$1 trillion compared to \$800 billion in the House version of the bill passed last week. These cuts, combined with the expiration of enhanced premium tax cuts for Affordable Care Act Marketplace plans, which made private coverage more affordable for millions of Americans, would result an increase in the number of people without health insurance by [about 17 million](#).

The legislation would [significantly interfere](#) with access to health care in the United States in many ways, including [hugely disruptive effects in rural areas](#). At the same time, the Congressional Budget Office estimates the bill would add [trillions to the national debt](#).

Both Senator Susan Collins and Senator Angus King voted against the final version of the bill. In [her statement](#) regarding the vote, Senator Collins said "My vote against this bill stems primarily from the harmful impact it will have on Medicaid, affecting low-income families and rural health care providers like our hospitals and nursing homes."

In [his statement](#) Senator King noted, "This bill will have catastrophic impacts on Maine people. In fact, I think this is the worst, most regressive and harmful piece of legislation I've ever seen. Here's the way I can best explain the consequences of this disastrous bill:

1. It will have devastating impacts upon Maine itself, on our state and on our state budgets.
2. It's going to have devastating impacts on Maine people.

3. It's a gross transfer of wealth from lower income people to the very wealthy.
4. Even with these devastating cuts, the bill still explodes the federal deficit which will result in higher interest rates and a drag on business expansion in Maine and across the country.”

Check out Family USA's [detailed summary](#) of health care provisions in the Senate version of the bill. The House [convened yesterday](#) to consider the Senate version.

Our vision at CAHC is that everyone has the right to a healthy and financially secure future that is not threatened by the cost of health care. Regardless of whether or in what form the legislation passes, we will be here to help Maine consumers access the health care they need.

### **Supreme Court Upholds ACA Preventive-Care Mandate**

Last Friday, the Supreme Court [upheld](#) a provision of the Affordable Care Act that requires health insurance plans to provide preventive services cost-free. The vote was 6-3. The case focused on the US Preventive Services Task Force, which had classified HIV prevention drugs as preventive care. Some individuals and businesses with religious objections to these services challenged the constitutionality of the Task Force. The Court held the Task Force was properly appointed.

### **Supreme Court Allows States to “Defund” Planned Parenthood**

Last Thursday, the US Supreme Court [ruled](#) 6-3 that Medicaid beneficiaries cannot sue state officials for preventing them from choosing their health care provider. The decision effectively means that states can exclude Planned Parenthood from their Medicaid programs, which could deal a devastating blow to these organizations. Close to half of Planned Parenthood patients are [covered by publicly funded programs](#) like Medicaid and Medicare. They receive a vast array of services, including contraceptive care, prenatal and postpartum care services, cancer screenings, vaccinations, preventive care, and wellness checks. According to the governor of South Carolina, the state at the center of the case, excluding Planned Parenthood was to [prevent coverage of abortion services](#). However, federal funding for abortion services has been banned since 1977, except when the life of the parent is at risk or in cases of rape or incest.

## **State**

### **State Budget Passes**

Last week, [Governor Mills signed into law LD 210](#), the “Part 2” state budget bill that funds certain state programs, that passed through the legislature earlier in the week. The bill adds

\$320 million to the \$11.3 billion baseline budget that was enacted earlier this year. Some important provisions in the Part 2 budget include:

- \$123M in funds to cover additional costs in the MaineCare program for fiscal year 2027.
- Providing \$20M to support nursing homes across the state
- Increasing funding for public colleges and universities by 4%
- Adding \$40M for childcare services
- Funding a 1% cost of living increase for direct care workers
- Funding to help preserve services put at risk by actions at the federal level, including Family Planning services and Meals on Wheels and services provided by Area Agencies on Aging.

Read the Maine Center for Economic Policy [summary](#) about what is (and what isn't) in the Part 2 budget.

Now that the bill has been signed, it will go into effect 90 days after the end of the legislative session.

### **Consumer Assistance Program Funding Extended**

This year, the legislature passed LD 843, An Act to Provide Funding for the Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program. This bill, which was sponsored by Senator Mike Tipping, provides funding for Maine's Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) through 2027. This will provide Mainers access to CAP services that include assistance with appealing denied insurance claims, enrolling people in coverage, and resolving issues with their private health insurance.

### **Medical Debt Protections Enacted into Law**

This past March, CAHC released [survey data](#) showing that nearly 50% of Maine households have medical debt. The majority of these families (80%) attribute their medical debt to hospital services. Over half of Mainers with medical debt are concerned about having a lower credit score as a result of their medical debt.

Senator Donna Bailey introduced LD 558, An Act to Strengthen Consumer Protections by Prohibiting the Report of Medical Debt on Consumer Reports. The [amended bill](#), which was signed by the Governor on June 9th after passing through both chambers of the legislature with unanimous support, prohibits the reporting of most medical debt on a consumer report. This is a step in the right direction for addressing some of the concerns many Mainers have about medical debt.

## **Hospital Financial Assistance Bill Passes through the Legislature, Signed into Law**

[LD 1937](#), sponsored by Senator Rachel Talbot-Ross, strengthens and improves Mainers' access to financial assistance programs at hospitals. Maine hospitals are required by Federal and State law to provide community benefits, including financial assistance, to maintain their tax-exempt status. The amount of financial assistance provided has decreased in recent years and such assistance represents less than 1% of net patient revenue for most hospitals.

While some hospitals already do so, the bill increases eligibility for hospital financial assistance from 150% to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. After significant negotiations between consumer advocates and hospital representatives last year, and further concessions made to address concerns hospitals had this year, the bill adds other protections and makes provisions to address barriers many Mainers face accessing financial assistance, including requiring hospitals to:

- Offer payment plans capped at 4% of income for patients earning less than 400% of the federal poverty level
- Provide an online option to apply for financial assistance
- Provide notice in registration and waiting rooms on how patients can access information about and an application for financial assistance, and
- Provide information on the process for disputing charges on patient bills.

### **[A comprehensive survey of Maine voters](#) released in March 2025 shows that:**

- Nearly one out of three families struggled to pay for necessities, like food, heat or housing due to medical bills, with the majority of these families (70%) reporting hospital-based care was the source of their financial impact.
- More than half of Mainers who incurred hospital debt in the past two years were not aware that Maine hospitals are required to provide free medically necessary care to Mainers who meet certain income guidelines.
- More than 3 out of four Mainers support requiring hospitals to increase the amount of financial assistance they provide in Maine.

Last week, the Maine Legislature passed LD 1937. This important bill was signed into law by the Governor on Tuesday, July 1st.

## **Addressing Prescription Drug Costs**

The legislature also passed, with unanimous support in the Maine Senate and nearly unanimous support in the Maine House, [LD 697](#), *An Act to Direct the Maine Prescription*

*Drug Affordability Board to Assess Strategies to Reduce Prescription Drug Costs and to Take Steps to Implement Reference-based Pricing.* The bill, sponsored by Senator Cameron Reny, expands the charge of Maine's Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB), authorizing it to assess strategies to reduce the cost of prescription drugs and reduce the rate of growth in prescription drug spending, and reduce cost barriers for consumers. The review of strategies must include consideration of the strategies' likely impact on consumers and overall health care costs and the feasibility of implementing such strategies. Over half of Maine people are concerned about not being able to afford a prescription drug or medicine they need and nearly just as many report not being able to afford their prescription drug copays.

The PDAB would consider efforts of other states also working to reduce prescription drug costs and report to the legislature on its findings by this coming January. This bill awaits the Governor's signature.

## **ICYMI**

The Vera C Rubin Observatory released its [first, mind-blowing images](#). The James Webb Space Telescope discovered an exoplanet by [directly imaging it](#). And astronomers are [rethinking](#) the Big Bang theory.

## **Know Someone Who Needs Health Insurance?**

People can apply for MaineCare anytime at [MyMaineConnection](#).

Those who don't qualify for MaineCare may be able to get Marketplace coverage after open enrollment if they qualify for a [Special Enrollment Period](#). Life changes like job loss, getting married, or moving may allow you to enroll during a short window of time.

Have questions about health coverage options? Call our HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476.