

From: Consumers for Affordable Health Care <consumerhealth@mainecahc.org>
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Coffee CAHC is a weekly newsletter where we round up and comment on the latest health coverage policy developments both nationally and here in Maine. We hope you find these updates helpful!

Please email policy@mainecahc.org with questions.



Coffee CAHC
118th Congress, 1st Session
131st Maine Legislature, 1st Session

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Good afternoon, Coffee CAHC readers,

This week, we feature the poem "[Tutuwas](#)" by Joseph Bruchac, an enrolled member of the Nulhegan Abenaki Nation. And, to complement the poem, here's [Tutuwas](#), a Wabanaki song sung by Passamaquoddy women.

National Level

No Surprises Act Prevented More than One Million Surprise Medical Bills – a Month! The federal [No Surprises Act](#) (NSA) protects consumers covered under group and individuals plans from out-of-network costs sharing when they receive care in an emergency room, at an in-network facility, or from out-of-network air ambulance providers. It also provides a dispute resolution process when plans and providers cannot resolve the matter themselves. Last year, America's Health Insurance Plans and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association [claimed](#) the legislation protected 9 million Americans from surprise medical bills. The Office of Health Policy at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a neutral evaluation in July, [the first of five annual reports](#).

Unfortunately, the law is the subject of [more than 20 lawsuits](#) and [difficulties related to the dispute resolution process](#). To shore up support for NSA, thirteen advocacy organizations, including Families USA, [have issued a letter to President Biden](#) urging that the administration to keep consumers at the center of its efforts going forward.

China Agrees to Restrain Illicit Fentanyl Production. After a meeting with President Xi Jinping of China this week, President Joe Biden [announced](#) China has agreed to cooperate in combating the opioid epidemic by limiting the manufacture and export of materials used to produce fentanyl. These components are shipped to Mexico, where cartels compound the drug and smuggle it into the U.S. Axios [quoted](#) Stanford University professor Keith Humphreys who said: "...this agreement will not end our

fentanyl problem, but it will create challenges for drug traffickers and that's a good thing.”

Reproductive Rights Affirmed in Ohio. Last week, [voters in Ohio approved](#) a constitutional amendment that protect abortion and other forms of reproductive health care. AP [notes six other states](#), California, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana and Vermont, have either affirmed abortion access or turned back attempts to restrict it. Next year, [another eleven states](#) will consider abortion-related ballot measures. Maine law [protects](#) the right to abortion and makes other forms of reproductive health care accessible. In fact, Maine allows [pharmacists](#) to write and fill prescriptions for contraceptives, [one of 29 states](#) to do so.

ICYMI: KFF reports [Compensation Is Key to Fixing Primary Care Shortage](#). The USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics writes that the global [COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign Saved 2.4 Million Lives](#). And Health Affairs looks into [A Systemic Review of COVID-19 Misinformation Interventions: Lessons Learned](#).

State Level

Maine Medical Association Endorses Universal Health Coverage. The Maine Medical Association (MMA), which represents over 4,000 physicians, resident physicians, and medical students, became the fifth state medical association to endorse universal health coverage earlier this year. The MMA adopted a *Statement on Reform of the U.S. Health Care System*, which points to many of the issues plaguing the current U.S. health care system and calls for immediate action to “to create a system that provides access to health care for all (as a public good), contains costs, eliminates health disparities, and ensures a robust public health system.”

According to the policy statement, there “must be a full reconfiguration of health care delivery and financing,” which could take the form of a single-payer system or a system that utilizes a combination of private and public financing that has government oversight to “protect consumers and providers from private profit-driven motives.”

Hawaii, New Hampshire, Vermont and Washington are [the only other states with medical associations that have adopted similar resolutions](#).

“While we are among a small number of medical associations to do this, we think our actions represent a growing consensus of physicians, both in Maine and nationally, that it’s time for every American to have health care insurance and to figure out how to do that in a way that’s affordable and equitable,” [said Dr. Erik Steele](#), who is a family practitioner in Yarmouth and the immediate past president of the MMA.

Acknowledging the challenges to achieving comprehensive federal reform amid current political divides, the policy statement from MMA also calls upon Maine's Legislature and Governor Mills to ensure universal access to health care for all Maine people by 2027 through expanding existing coverage options or other innovative and sustainable solutions.

You can read MMA’s *Statement on Reform of the U.S. Health Care System*, [here](#).

Open Enrollment for 2024 Health Plans Is Here. The annual open enrollment period for 2024 individual health insurance has started. Open enrollment will end on January 16, 2024. People who enroll in a plan by December 15, will have coverage begin on

January 1, 2024. People who sign up during open enrollment after December 15 will have their coverage begin on February 1, 2024.

Mainers looking for 2024 health coverage can apply for and enroll in a plan at CoverME.gov, Maine's State-based Marketplace. Certified Maine Enrollment Assistants are also available throughout the state to provide free one-on-one enrollment help. You can find an enrollment assister near you [here](#), or call our free confidential HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476.

Last year, [more than 8 out of 10](#) Mainers who enrolled in Marketplace plans during open enrollment qualified for financial assistance to lower their monthly premiums.

Mainers shopping for 2024 coverage on CoverME.gov can choose from health plans offered by Anthem, Community Health Options, Harvard Pilgrim, and, in certain counties, Taro Health. You can get premium estimates and view your 2024 plan options using CoverME.gov's [Plan Comparison Tool](#) or call our HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476.

And don't forget, you can apply MaineCare any time of year- learn more at CoverME.gov or call our HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476 with questions about your coverage options or if you need help applying for or enrolling in coverage.

Want to Know More?

Science News explains [how hummingbirds fly sideways](#) to navigate through narrow spaces. NPR says [bonobos, unlike chimpanzees, cooperate across groups](#). And Live Science explores the possibility that [elephants give each other names](#).

Until next time,

The staff at CAHC



Consumers for Affordable Health Care is a Maine based, nonprofit, private organization that works to advocate the right to quality, affordable health care for every person in Maine. We do this through our toll-free Consumer Assistance HelpLine, educational publications and trainings as well as bringing the voice of the Maine people to the legislature when health care or coverage issues arise.

Please consider making a donation to support this important work.

Donations Welcomed



Consumers for Affordable Health Care | PO Box 2490, Augusta, ME 04330 1-800-965-7476

[Unsubscribe consumerhealth@mainecahc.org](mailto:unsubscribe_consumerhealth@mainecahc.org)