

Testimony FOR LD 1397 May 3, 2011 before the Joint Select Com. on Insurance and Financial Services --- **Alice Bolstridge**, Presque Isle ME



Alice Bolstridge, Ph.D. Presque Isle

It is foolish for all of us to trust our health to companies whose only motive is profit.
(Read more...)

I am a retired teacher with a Maine State Retirement pension. When I signed up for Medicare in 2003, the only additional coverage I could get for which the MSR System would pay their 45% share was Aetna, the company providing my health insurance at the time of retirement. I started paying about \$350 a month from my own pocket, and the premium went up every year. At some point I needed surgery and was hospitalized for several days. When the bills started coming in, I discovered that I did not have the supplement plan I thought I had, but a catastrophic insurance plan that also covered prescription drugs which I didn't need. Aetna did not pay any of the co-pay expenses for the surgery and hospital stay. By this time my premium was up to about \$450 a month. With the state's 45% share, my insurance was costing over \$700 a month. Not only was I getting ripped off, the state was, too. As a taxpayer, I was feeling cheated twice to pay for Aetna profits. The whole experience was a nightmare with trying to figure out if I should blame the insurance company or the providers who kept harassing me with bills.

When the collection agency threatened me, I paid the bill to get some peace of mind, but my trust in some of the health care providers involved in that has never recovered. I don't intend to recover any trust in for-profit insurance. **It is foolish for all of us to trust our health to companies whose only motive is profit.** And it is foolish to trust providers who are encouraged by the way they are paid to compromise quality of care and to waste money for unnecessary procedures. I dropped Aetna coverage and picked up an Advantage plan. I don't trust them either. They start you out cheap and then increase the premiums by 100 percent or more every year. The first one stopped offering the product I had after about 2 years. The one I have now started out with a payment of \$0 per month and increased the premium to \$50 per month the first year. I don't even know how to calculate that percentage.

When I first began my experience with a non-profit Blue cross/ Blue shield decades ago, our insurance life was simple and worry-free. Faced with a life-threatening illness of one child, we all—the patient, his family, and the providers—could focus on the medical problems of the illness, not on what we would have to sacrifice to pay for the treatment. We need a payment system that returns us to that simplicity, effectiveness, and trust. Please pass LD 1397 and get insurance companies out of the health care business.