

CHAMBERNEWS

February 2014



By John Porter, President and CEO, Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce

Perhaps the most hotly debated issue in Augusta during this legislative session is whether the state should expand the health care insurance program for low-income Mainers under the federal Affordable Care Act, and business has a big stake in the outcome.

Under federal law, Maine has a chance to grow its Medicaid program, known as MaineCare, with the federal government paying a significant share of the costs. This expansion would pump hundreds of millions of dollars a year into the Maine economy.

Proponents say that injecting that much outside money into the state cannot help but have a positive economic impact, and that there would be benefits to getting more people covered.

Opponents object to the notion of expanding government-funded programs for working people. They also note that the state government would have to spend more – how much is in dispute – to leverage the federal money.

The Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce has taken a position in favor of expanding MaineCare under the Affordable Care Act. Our board found it persuasive that pumping what State Sen. Roger Katz, R-Augusta, has said could be as much as \$1 million a day into the economy would likely translate into a net positive in terms of economic growth. This would be especially true for our regional economy, which has a large health-care sector.

But not all our members agree with this notion, and some are passionate about not

moving in a direction of more government-funded health care.

The details of this debate can be mind-numbing. There are competing numbers and claims as to the benefits, both economic and social. The issue is wrapped tightly with political calculations leading to the November elections, too.

With this in mind, the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce is dedicating its Early Bird Breakfast on Feb. 26 to a discussion of the MaineCare expansion. Joining us will be Mary Mayhew, commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Shawn Yardley, Director of Community Services with Penobscot Community Health Care, and Harrison Clark, who owns a small business, ServiceMaster Clean of Bangor.

As a member of Gov. Paul LePage's administration, Mayhew has been helping to make the case against expansion. Yardley's organization is one of many health care providers who have been pushing hard for the expansion. Clark has been a student of the issue and a member of the Chamber's Governmental Affairs Committee.

Please note we have a new venue for the Early Bird program this year. Details are in the panel on the right side of this page.

I hope you'll join us for what promises to be a relevant, and hopefully insightful, program.

Weighing the pros
and cons of the
MaineCare
Expansion


BANGOR REGION
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CHAMBER EVENTS

Early Bird Breakfast

Feb. 26, 2014

New location!

**Hilton Garden Inn, Haskell Rd.,
Bangor**

**TOPIC: MaineCare Expansion:
Good or bad for the economy?**

Whether Maine's Medicaid program should be expanded under the federal Affordable Care Act has dominated the state legislative session thus far. Our panel will explore the pros and cons. It includes Mary Mayhew, commissioner of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Shawn Yardley, Director of Community Services with Penobscot Community Health Care, and Harrison Clark, who owns a small business, ServiceMaster Clean of Bangor.

Networking 7:00am

Breakfast 7:30am

Program 8-9am

Tickets \$17 members

\$22 non-members

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UPDATE**

Our February Hot Stove Session was well attended with nearly 50 area lawmakers and Chamber members discussing issues important to the region.

The discussion started off on the topic of Medicaid expansion, and there was some substantive discussion of how a compromise could be forged by combining reform of the program with accepting federal dollars to grow it. The budget and the prospect for bonds – especially those for R&D – also got attention.

The Action Committee of 50 made a presentation and sought support for the dredging project proposed for Searsport Harbor. Ben Sprague, chair of the Bangor City Council, discussed his recent white paper on ways to attract families and entrepreneurs to the Bangor Region.

Next Hot Stove: March 8, 8-10am, at Eastern Maine Community College's Rangeley Hall. We appreciate EMCC's support for this program.



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Please join us on February 19th for Fusion's Newcomers' Night. Head over to COESPACE at 48 Columbia Street for a free, intimate gathering that welcomes newcomers of FUSION:Bangor and/or the Bangor area.

Come to learn more about Fusion, how to get involved in the community, and connect with other Fusion members. There will be complimentary food, beer, wine and great conversation.



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6:30PM
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Workplace Wellness Leadership Symposium



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March 20, 2014 • 8am-4pm
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Details: wellnesscouncilofmaine.org

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