



LD 258 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

Testimony – Finance Authority of Maine

February 15, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Committee On Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business my name is Peggy McRae. I am a registered nurse and President of Maine's Nursing Action Coalition presenting our comments on the Governor's budget.

Nursing Action Coalitions were started by a partnership between AARP the AARP Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Nursing Action Coalitions were formed in every state and Washington, D.C. to carry out the work of the Campaign for the Future of Nursing at the local, regional, and state levels. In 2010, the IOM released The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health with the purpose of producing a report that would make recommendations for an action-oriented blueprint for the future of nursing. One of the recommendations focused on improving the effectiveness of nursing workforce planning and policy making with better data collection. MeNAC has focused our work on Maine's nursing workforce data.

In the spring of 2022 MeNAC joined the Maine Hospital Association to conduct an analysis to update the nursing workforce shortage projection for Maine. Our data documents that In 2021 Maine had a nursing workforce shortage of 2,250 RNs. The adjusted forecast thru 2025 projects that the nursing shortage has been reduced to 1, 450 RN's if the intensity of nursing care returns to pre-COVID levels of care, if not the demand for nurse's results in an ongoing shortage of 2, 250 RNs through 2025. Our improvement for the original shortage projection of 3200 RN's is driven by an annual increase in the number of early career, newly educated and licensed RNs.

We support the Health Professions Loan Repayment Pilot Program knowing that many nurses applied and received loan support funding. We are in full support of the Governor's proposal to provide FAME with an additional \$4 million dollars for the loan repayment program.

MeNAC joined Maine's nursing organizations and faculty in supporting funding for the Nurse Educator Loan Repayment Program during the 130th Legislature. The \$1 million dollars in original funding was quickly allocated by FAME in the initial round of applications during the late summer of 2022. Funds will support 12 masters prepared nurses and 12 doctoral prepared nurses to pay off advanced education debt with a commitment to teach for 3 years in a Maine based nursing education program. This is significant progress in addressing the faculty needs of our nursing programs. The funds were allocated

as one-time funding that is now nearly fully spent. **We ask that the committee's include \$1 million dollars in the biennial budget to provide ongoing funds to sustain the nursing education loan repayment program into future years.** The addition funds will not be time limited and provide flexibility to support nurse educator loan funding for future faculty needs as older faculty retire over time.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the need to support loan repayment for nurses and nursing faculty.