



**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 Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of Finance Authority of Maine health professions funding as propose in the biennial budget bill.

Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with over 12,000 employees statewide.

The Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Pilot Program was resourced with \$1 million dollars in one time funding to provide loan repayment for high demand health care professionals. As one of Maine's largest health care employers we encouraged qualified health professionals in our employ to complete loan support applications. It is our understanding that the volume of applications was very high, thus demonstrating the need for financial loan support to offset educational debt. Maine's nursing workforce challenge is an excellent example of a health profession in great demand with more positions than available workers. In the spring of 2022 the Maine Hospital Association and Maine's Nursing Action Coalition issued an updated projection estimating the shortage of nurses in Maine totals 2,250 RN's. Northern Light Health is recruiting for 500 nurses to care for patients in our hospitals, home care, hospice and other health services. We are in full support of the Governor's budget proposal to provide \$4 million dollars in funding for the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Pilot Program.

**But, we must express our disappointment that the Governor's budget does not include funding for the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program. The core root of Maine's nursing workforce shortage is the need for more faculty in all of our nursing education programs.** The legislature passed \$1 million dollars in funding in 2021 for this loan program. The program was also modernized to require eligible faculty to teach full time for 3 years in a Maine based program and updated the loan caps for masters and

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Inland Hospital  
Maine Coast Hospital  
Mayo Hospital  
Mercy Hospital  
Northern Light Health Foundation  
Northern Light Laboratory  
Northern Light Pharmacy  
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

doctoral prepared nursing faculty. The program was a tremendous success with the first round of applications. In the fall of 2022 FAME approved nurse educator loan repayment for 12 masters and 12 doctoral faculty exhausting nearly all of the \$1 million dollars in available funding. **We ask that you include in the biennial budget \$1 million dollars in funding for the nurse education loan repayment program to support the ongoing critical need for nurse educators in Maine.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this critically important funding.