



**Northern Light
Health**

LD 904 An Act Supporting the Rural Health Care Workforce in Maine

**Testimony in Support
April 6, 2023**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Dr. James Jarvis M.D. I am the Medical Director of Clinical Education at Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center, and I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this 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.

This bill establishes the Maine Rural Health Care Education Workforce Fund and provides \$500,000 to support primary care and health professions workforce development in rural parts of the State.

Despite the work being done at EMMC and other health centers and systems across the state to train the next generation of physicians, the current physician workforce shortage is only going to become worse unless some fundamental changes are made for the availability of medical school and residency opportunities to Mainers interested in pursuing medicine as a career. According to a 2018 report from the Center for Health Workforce Studies, nearly 43% of Maine's physicians were over the age of 55. That number rises to over 50% in our most rural counties.

According to the Graham Center and the American Medical Association, we know that more than half of practicing physicians work within 100 miles of where they trained either in medical school or residency. Under a grant from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, a collaboration between Maine Medical Center, Central Maine Medical Center, and the Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency Program was created with a mission to increase the number of clinical rotations in rural Maine communities for residents and fellows in accredited graduate medical education programs. While this work is just beginning, we have already built the framework for five new sites, create training programs for faculty at these and future sites, and expand education in social determinants of health and inclusion. This collaborative will serve as a model for future initiatives, but only if funding is available to sustain and grow such opportunities.

Northern Light Health
Government Relations
43 Whiting Hill Road
Brewer, Maine 04412

Office 207.861.3282
Fax 207.861.3044

Northern Light Health

Acadia Hospital
A.R. Gould Hospital
Beacon Health
Blue Hill Hospital
C.A. Dean Hospital
Eastern Maine Medical Center
Home Care & Hospice
Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mayo Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Northern Light Laboratory
Northern Light Pharmacy
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

This bill also supports the long-term sustainability of rural clinical preceptor programs to support students in graduate and undergraduate nursing programs. Northern Light Health rural hospitals work collaboratively with Maine's nursing education programs providing clinical preceptors to support students to complete their clinical education in local communities leading to employment in rural locations when licensed as a Registered Nurse.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this important legislation.