

Testimony in Support of LD 1797, An Act to Expand Maine's Health Care Workforce by Expanding Educational Opportunities and Providing Tax Credits

May 2, 2023

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Tristan Brunet and I am a second-year medical student at University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNE COM). Thank you for allowing me to share my perspective on an issue that I know much about as a born-and-raised Mainer; the continued shortage of health care providers in Maine.

During my time as a medical student, I have already overcome many hurdles. However, soon I will be forced to address an unforeseen hurdle; deciding if I will end up staying in Maine as a practicing physician. I am now finishing my second year of medical school and next year, I will be sent to a clinical site, where I will be located at for a full year. As has been previously mentioned by Dean Carreiro, the two best predictors of where a physician will practice is where they do their clinical training and where they do their residency. Due to the current lack of clinical sites in Maine for third-year students, I will be stationed in Utica, New York. In light of this, many of my first connections in the clinical world will be in the New York area, and I will likely spend even more time there during my final year of medical school. These factors will end up impacting where I match for residency, which in all likelihood could end up being outside of the state of Maine, considering the limited number of residencies and resident positions the state currently holds.

When it comes time to decide on where I end up practicing after residency, most of it comes down to a financial decision. With the combination of an undergraduate degree and medical school, I am projected to owe about half of a million dollars. Even though I originally decided to enter the medical field for the purpose of providing medical care to my community, there may come a time directly after residency where I must choose to practice somewhere other than Maine in order to help pay back my school loans. However, if there were more programs set in place to lighten this debt, it would be an easy decision to practice and stay in Maine.

As a future physician, I want nothing more than to be able to practice medicine in Maine. I just hope that the State of Maine can show that it wants me and other health care professionals to be here through expanding scholarships, residencies, clinical sites, and loan repayment programs.

Thank you for your time.

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