

Testimony of Jensen Bissell  
In opposition to LD 1639

“An Act to Address Unsafe Staffing of Nurses and Improve Patient Care”

May 4, , 2023

My name is Jensen Bissell and I live in Milo, Maine. I have served on the board of directors of Mayo Regional Hospital in Dover Foxcroft since 2008. I also serve on the board of CA Dean Hospital in Greenville. Both of these Piscataquis County critical access hospitals are a part of the Northern Light Health system. I have chaired the Finance Committee at Mayo for more than a decade and I also sit on the NLH Finance Committee.

Small rural hospitals in Maine like Mayo and CA Dean face continuous challenges in our effort to treat county residents and improve the health of the communities we serve. Improving access to health care has always been an issue. LD1639 would require a significant, if not substantial increase in the nursing staff at both Mayo and CA Dean. As you will undoubtedly hear in other testimony, qualified nurses are in short supply and very difficult to hire. Based on my experience, the requirements of LD1639 would require both hospitals to reduce the available beds to meet the requirements of the statute language. This would reduce access to our service population - exactly the opposite of our efforts.

In both my work and personal experience, I have yet to be involved with a field that is more regulated or more data-driven than healthcare. Our small critical access hospitals are governed by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) regarding staffing and patient acuity. Both CA Dean Hospital and Mayo Hospital are part of the Northern Light Health System. NLH uses ratios set by professional nursing associations to advise on workforce and staffing assignments. We recognize that our nurses are the backbone of our effort to provide care and treatment to Piscataquis County residents. As a board member, we have worked continuously for the past decade to maintain and support our nursing staff and improve health care access to the residents of Piscataquis County. Enacting LD 1639 would be a step backward - resulting in greater challenges in supporting our nursing staff and reducing access to health care for our residents. I urge you to vote “Not in Favor”

Thank you,

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