

**State of Maine | 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Labor
March 12, 2025**

Supporting:

LD 703, “An Act to Establish a Health Care Gap Year Program for Recent College Graduates”

Sponsored by Representative Rana

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name is Emily Ferry, and I am here on behalf of the Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). MPCA is a membership organization that represents Maine's Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). I am pleased to provide testimony in support of LD 703, An Act to Establish a Health Care Gap Year Program for Recent College Graduates in Maine.

Our state’s FQHCs provide high quality, accessible primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services to over 1 in 6 Maine residents annually, regardless of their ability to pay. As we continue to face workforce shortages in healthcare, especially in rural and underserved areas, LD 703 presents an innovative solution that would expand access to care while fostering the development of future healthcare professionals.

The Health Care Gap Year Program proposed in LD 703 would allow for continued invaluable opportunities for recent college graduates to gain hands-on experience in clinical and administrative roles within healthcare settings. This program would provide graduates with paid positions where they can contribute meaningfully to patient care, while exploring potential career paths in primary care, behavioral health, and public health services. Importantly, this program would encourage young professionals to stay in Maine, strengthening our healthcare workforce pipeline.

FQHCs are uniquely positioned to serve as host sites for these gap year participants. In the past few years, two FQHCs have been able to fill vacancies for high need clinical support positions through the Gap Year Program. FQHCs offer rich learning environments where participants can engage with varied patient populations, address multifaceted patient needs, and gain firsthand experience working in integrated care teams. By providing structured mentorship, professional development, and real-world experience, this program can inspire participants to pursue long-term careers in healthcare—helping to address critical workforce shortages that threaten access to care in our communities.

We know that early exposure to healthcare careers increases the likelihood of individuals committing to these fields. LD 703 would make that exposure more accessible and impactful by reducing financial barriers and fostering connections between recent graduates and potential employers.

For these reasons, the Maine Primary Care Association strongly supports LD 703. I urge this committee to advance this bill to help build a stronger, more sustainable healthcare workforce for Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Emily Ferry
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