



**Northern Light  
Health<sup>SM</sup>**

**LD 518 Resolve, Increasing Access to Maternal and Child Health Care**

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

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am submitting testimony today in support of this bill on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 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 more than 10,000 employees statewide.

Northern Light Health birthing hospitals include Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor, AR Gould Hospital in Presque Isle, Maine Coast Hospital in Ellsworth, Mayo Hospital in Dover Foxcroft and Mercy Hospital in Portland. Our birthing hospitals average 3000 births per year. To prepare for this hearing I reached out internally to gather information on referrals for newborn babies and moms to the Cradle ME program. I learned that there is a legacy impression that the program is limited to high-risk moms/babies and that there is limited capacity for public health nurses to accept referrals. The referral capacity challenge is certainly accurate in Southern Maine as Portland Public Health has discharged 3 of the nurses from service due to a Maine CDC funding reduction. In Northern and Eastern Maine there is capacity but a legacy belief that the public health nursing resources are not adequately staffed.

Referrals to the Cradle ME program is a prevention best practice recommendation in the 2023-2024 Maine Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel Annual Report. The report specifically recommends universal referrals from birthing hospitals to Maine's Cradle ME program for all families of infants.

This bill directs DHHS to examine barriers to universal referral of all pregnant and parenting individuals and families to the Cradle ME program and develop recommendations to remove barriers and increase referrals. We support this legislation and look forward to stakeholder participation in this important discussion. We further recommend that this bill be amended to include funding for Portland Public Health nurses to restore access to this critically important prevention service.

Thank you.