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March 12, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

RE: Testimony IN SUPPORT - LD 689, An Act to Support the Northern New England Poison Center

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Amy Downing, I am a resident of Smithfield, Maine, and the Executive Director of the Maine Pharmacy Association. The MPA is the state pharmacy organization that addresses the advocacy, continuing education and professional needs of all licensed pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and student pharmacists in Maine. Our mission is to promote public health by advocating for the profession of pharmacy. On behalf of the Maine Pharmacy Association, I am testifying today in support to LD 689, An Act to Support the Northern New England Poison Center.

The Maine Pharmacy Association fully supports the work the Northern New England Poison Center performs on a daily basis for the state of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. The Center helps parents with children who ingest personal care products, cleaners and medications, as well as those who accidentally make errors while administering medications. Our Pharmacy members know that accidental ingestions of medications is something that occurs more often than you would expect and the pharmacy profession is fortunate to have the experts at the NNEPC to rely on for information. This can range from accidentally administering too large of a dose of an antibiotic for a baby to a small child getting into their caretaker's blood pressure medicine.

The NNEPC also assists adult patients, including older adults who take their medication twice, take their spouses medication, take too much insulin or have other misadventures. In 2023-2024 there were over 14,000 calls from Maine, alone. The specialists who answer the hotline, chats and texts in real time are nurses and pharmacists with special training and national certification in management of poisoning cases. Because poisoning management is an expertise and recommended treatment changes over time, and quickly, it is necessary to have well-trained specialists available 24 x 7.

The Poison Center assists retail, hospital and clinical pharmacists, as well as their patients, with not only exposures to household products, chemicals, and gases, but also with medication overdoses and errors. The need for assistance is greater than ever with almost half of the cases originating from Maine, the state funding for Maine poison center services is less than half of that provided by New Hampshire (similar population as Maine) and less than that from Vermont, a state with half the population of Maine. Cases are more severe and require a higher level of expertise. Many cases involve serious therapeutic errors, suicide attempts and substance abuse. Appropriate funding of the poison center is necessary to ensure this vital service is available to those who need it.

For the reasons above, we ask for your support of LD 689. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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