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March 28, 2025

Testimony in Support of LD 763: *An Act To Protect Rural Nursing Facilities* Health and Human Services Committee

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Representative Holly Eaton, and I proudly represent House District 15, which includes several island and coastal communities in Hancock County, including Deer Isle and Stonington. I'm submitting testimony today in strong support of LD 763, a bill sponsored by Senator Nicole Grohoski to protect Maine's rural nursing facilities.

This issue hits close to home. When the Island Nursing Home in Deer Isle closed in 2021, our entire community felt the loss. Families were separated from their loved ones. Elders who had hoped to age in place were uprooted and placed in unfamiliar settings far from home. Healthcare workers lost jobs, and we lost an institution that had provided care and comfort for generations.

Since that time, many of us—including local leaders, community members, and legislators—have worked in a multitude of capacities to support long-term care access and explore solutions to prevent similar closures. LD 763 reflects that ongoing effort and commitment. It acknowledges the disproportionate challenges faced by rural nursing facilities and offers meaningful steps to support their sustainability.

Rural Mainers should not be left behind. Every person deserves the opportunity to age with dignity, surrounded by the people and places they know. We cannot continue to allow rural communities to lose access to critical care services simply because they are small or geographically isolated.

I urge you to support LD 763 and take this opportunity to protect the fabric of Maine's rural communities.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this issue.

District 15: Brooklin, Deer Isle, Eagle Island Township, Frenchboro, Southwest Harbor, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven