



**Northern Light
Health**

LD 763 An Act to Improve Long-term Care by Providing Funding for Nursing Facilities

**Testimony in Support
March 28, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 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.

I want to begin my testimony by acknowledging the outstanding caregivers that care for older adults in our nursing homes, residential care facilities and individual homes. I thank every nurse, nursing assistant and direct care worker in a long-term care setting. The positive impact they have on residents and their families is genuine and makes a true difference in the lives of thousands of Maine people.

But the system is broken, we have a crisis of long-term care patients living in our hospitals waiting to access nursing facility care. On any given day, we have over 40 long term care patients living in a Northern Light Health hospital clinically ready for discharge but no available nursing facility bed. It is very common to wait for weeks and some of these patients wait for months for a bed to become available.

The challenge of long stay nursing facility patients in hospital beds for extended periods is disrupting care throughout the State of Maine. Patients are in our emergency departments for extended periods waiting for admission to an inpatient bed and gravely ill patients are stuck in small rural hospitals waiting for admission to Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center for specialty care. The challenge is so significant at EMMC that the hospital dedicated a patient care unit to care for nursing facility residents awaiting discharge, the unit began in 2022 and continues to this day. Every hospital is challenged by the lack of access to nursing facility beds in the State of Maine.

When a facility closes the beds have economic value to receive MaineCare revenue, so beds are "bought" and the MaineCare revenue flows to a new nursing facility or an expanded facility. We are not creating capacity in rural regions experiencing closures, capacity is added to larger urban or near urban locations. We are on a trajectory to eliminate access to nursing facility care in our rural communities. The very communities that have the highest percentage of older adults in the regional population.

Northern Light Health
Government Relations
43 Whiting Hill Road
Brewer, Maine 04412

Office 207.861.3282
Fax 207.861.3044

Northern Light Health

Acadia Hospital
A.R. Gould Hospital
Blue Hill Hospital
C.A. Dean Hospital
Eastern Maine Medical Center
Home Care & Hospice
Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mayo Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Northern Light Pharmacy
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

We understand that the Department has initiated payment system reform for nursing homes with a goal to stabilize the finances of the facilities. Unfortunately, nursing homes continue to close with the pending closure of a facility in Aroostook County.

We ask that you support this important legislation.