



**LD 980 Resolve, to Create the Commission to Improve the Oversight of the
Long-term Care System**

**Testimony Neither for Nor Against
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 neither for nor against 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.

While we did experience nursing home closures before 2020, the pandemic accelerated the number of facilities closing due to a combination of financial and labor challenges. The closures are not rationally planned based on the aging demographic of a region, they occur randomly and often in rural areas. When a closure occurs, residents are transferred to a distant location that becomes their home and families bear the burden of increased travel expense and time to be together.

Over the past decade, the number of nursing home beds has fallen by 25% to 79 facilities. This will soon be 78 facilities with the pending closure of a nursing home in Aroostook County. Maine has the lowest number of beds in New England based on our population, we are down to 4.7 beds per 1000 population. Attached to my testimony is a map of beds per population for the New England states.

Nursing facilities are the most visual component of a long-term care continuum that is in crisis. Residential care facilities succeed with a private pay business model, leaving MaineCare residents on long wait lists for months and years. Adults and children needing long-term in-home services wait for services or receive only a portion of the care they need due to workforce challenges. These challenges in the system leave individuals and their families accessing care when and where they can. Sometimes this means that hospitals become the pathway of least resistance as our emergency departments must care for everyone who enters.

It is time to establish a rational process to methodically evaluate the laws and policies that create the framework for our long-term care system, invest strategically in our

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Mayo Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Northern Light Pharmacy
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

infrastructure and plan for future capacity to meet the needs of the people of Maine. A long-term care commission can strategically focus on projecting the number of beds that we need to bring back to the system and recommendations to stabilize the industry to care for Maine's aging population.

We ask that you support this important legislation.

New England States Nursing Home Beds Per 1,000 Population

Over the last decade, the number of nursing homes in Maine has fallen by 25% to 79 currently operating.

