



Testimony in Support:

LD 625 “An Act Supporting Education for the Rural Health Care Workforce”

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representatives Meyer, and the Committee on Health and Human Services, Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kimberly Caldwell, I’m a masters degree trained and board certified Physician Associate (PA) and today I testify on behalf of the Maine Academy of Physician Associates (MEAPA), where I serve as the Immediate-Past-President. I currently practice throughout Maine and reside in Auburn.

I am testifying today in support of LD 625. In 2020, LD1660, An Act to Increase Access to Physician Assistant Care<sup>1</sup>, was signed into law with the goal to bolster access to these quality healthcare practitioners, particularly in underserved rural communities. This law ensures Maine PAs are able to practice at the height of their training, experience and expertise, where they can continue to function as a member of the healthcare team, from within a practice. This law also allows PA’s to practice independently, following 4,000 hours of collaborative and supported practice, by filing a practice agreement with the Board of Licensure in Medicine and/or the Osteopathic Board.

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<sup>1</sup><https://trackbill.com/bill/maine-legislative-document-1660-an-act-to-improve-access-to-physician-assistant-care/1743820/>



I want to highlight Maine's only PA program, which is at the University of New England (UNE). This program is chronically challenged to identify willing preceptors (physicians, PAs or NPs). UNE's PA program is unique, with its focus on primary care and an emphasis on rural, underserved and geriatric patient populations. At UNE PA training consists of 12 rigorous months of didactic and simulation based learning followed by 12 months of clinical rotations, where PA's are placed throughout the state of Maine from Presque Isle to Stonington to Millinocket to Bridgton etc.

The UNE PA Program deliberately prepares the PA for rural primary care practice. Approximately 75% of graduates from UNE's PA Program stay to practice in Maine. In this way, PA students and residents of rural Maine alike would benefit from an incentive program bolstering precepting opportunities and furthering the development of longitudinal training programs for PA students.

Thank you for your consideration and continued interest in solving the rural healthcare shortages in Maine.

Sincerely,

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