

State of Maine | 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Leslie Lorentzen on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
April 4, 2025

Supporting:
LD 1311 An Act to Expand Maine's Health Care Workforce by Improving Educational Opportunities
Sponsored by Senator Ingwersen

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Leslie Lorentzen, Workforce Program Manager at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). MPCA is a membership organization that represents Maine's Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Maine's CHCs make up the largest independent primary care network in the state, providing high quality and accessible primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services for over 200,000 people (1 in 6 Mainers) at more than 100 service delivery sites in all 16 Maine counties.

The Maine Health Care Education Training and Medical Residency Fund would support health care in rural and underserved communities and physician workforce development. As an organization that provides training and technical assistance to support workforce development efforts in recruitment, retention, and clinical education, we see daily the struggles that health centers are facing.

Maine's CHCs have long felt the impacts of primary care workforce shortages. Rural areas, in particular, are experiencing critical challenges with access to care. Some commonly identified issues specific to our CHCs are increased retirements due to an aging workforce; difficulty hiring, recruiting, and retaining clinical staff and support staff; a dire need for more primary care physicians, RNs, and behavioral health clinicians; wage inflation and competition; and a lack of high-quality training that prepares clinical support staff for employment at a CHC.

Many health centers in Maine are using the "earn while you learn" model to invest in skills development for their current staff. Additional funding would continue to support this existing infrastructure and create additional capacity for health centers to take more residents and students for clinical rotations. Supporting students who want to complete their residency requirements in rural areas also benefits overall efforts to incentivize employment in Maine after residency. According to the 2024 Report on Residents from the Association of American Medical Colleges, "more than half (58.6%) of the individuals who completed residency training from 2014 through 2023 are practicing in the state where they did their residency training."¹

On behalf of Maine's Community Health Centers, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at llorentzen@mepca.org with any follow-up questions.

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¹ <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/students-residents/data/report-residents/2024/executive-summary>