

Good morning,

I last spoke to the legislature in 2020 asking that you pass LD 1660, allowing for greater freedom for Physician Assistants to practice within the scope of their practice. This was passed, and has made a significant impact on those of us providing quality patient care in Maine and, more importantly, upon our patients. I am coming to you today to again ask for your support of the PAs who are practicing throughout Maine and those we hope to employ throughout Maine in the future. I encourage you to vote yes on LD 1166, An Act to Update the Professional Title and Identification of Physician Assistants to Physician Associates.

First allow me to introduce -or reintroduce- myself. I am Elizabeth Held, and have been a PA in Maine for many years. In fact, I was the 180th PA to be licensed in Maine 43 years ago. I am also a Certified Healthcare Ethicist, have a Master's degree in bioethics (and almost—darn, so close—may soon, have my Doctorate in Bioethics and Health Care Policy) and am a Distinguished Fellow of the American Academy of Physician Assistants. In addition to providing primary care in rural areas of Maine, I have also served as Medical Director for Ambulatory Medicine in a rural Maine hospital. My passionate commitment throughout these years, has been to serve the primary health care needs of the people in rural Maine communities. I am now at the University of New England as faculty, clinical coordinator and principal investigator for a HRSA 1.5-million-dollar grant placing PA students in rural communities. I offer you my background so that you can fully understand my commitment and understanding of the health care needs of the people of Maine, my desire to provide high level care to this population, and my long-standing commitment to the PA profession.

As a PA for several decades, I have witnessed, and been part of, the many changes which have made our profession a strong one. As the role and education of a PA has continued to develop, rigorous education requirements and enhanced training have increased. This has allowed for responsible increased PA responsibility in clinical practice. We are now a vital member of a collaborative health care team. We practice in almost every specialty, meet the health care needs in underserved communities, volunteer to treat members of the homeless and immigrant communities, and participate in education in the schools and communities. As a highly qualified healthcare professional, a PA does much more than simply assist. The title change from Physician Assistant to Physician Associate far better represents the role of the PA in the healthcare arena today.

Patients may at times be confused with all the people who care for them, whether inpatient or outpatient. For them to believe their health care provider is “assisting”

someone is further confusing. By being known as an Associate, PAs are firmly rooted as a dynamic part of the healthcare ecosystem, one the patients can trust and respect. The Physician Associate title clearly defines the profession. It reaffirms a commitment to a solid, collaborative, team-based approach that provides quality, patient centered health care. This title change will not change our scope of practice, but instead more accurately represent the vital role we already assume within a practice. With the new title of Physician Associate we, as PAs, who have been providing compassionate care to the people of Maine for many, many years, will be better understood as practicing providers, not as assistants to providers. This will allow our patients to remain confident in the patient centered, high quality, collaborative team treatment they deserve and will receive from the Physician Associate treating them.