



LD 1311 An Act to Expand Maine's Health Care Workforce by Improving Educational Opportunities

April 4, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Dr. James Jarvis and I am the Director of Clinical Education for Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center. I am here today 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.

This bill establishes the Maine Health Care Education Training and Medical Residency Fund and appropriates \$5,000,000 annually to support health care in rural and underserved communities and physician workforce development. The fund ensures that the ME Rural GME Education (MERGE) Collaborative that is dedicated to rural training for medical residents will continue. The Collaborative is a partnership with Northern Light Health, Central Maine Medical Center, Maine Medical Center and Maine-Dartmouth Family Residency Program at Maine General Hospital. The Collaborative was created in 2022 with grant funding from Maine DHHS. DHHS funded four ACGME Sponsoring Institutions in Maine to create a first-of-its-kind collaboration in Maine to develop high quality rural residency rotations at hospitals and community-based healthcare center across the state with a focus on giving medical residents experience caring for Maine's diverse socio-economic, racial and regional populations.

The MERGE Collaborative created 35 new rural rotations in 13 different specialties. The first rural rotation launched in July of 2023 and 45 rural rotations have been completed with another 12 scheduled for this year. In June of 2024 10 residents who completed the MERGE clinical rotation graduated and 60% are now practicing in rural areas of Maine.

The Fund will also support establishing and expanding clinical preceptorships in rural and underserved communities including the cost of preceptor recruiting, training and compensation for preceptor time and the cost of travel. For Northern Light Health advanced practice provider students for varying Universities, the fund will support our costs for their rural clinical placements in Northern and Eastern Maine. Our rural nursing education partnership with Eastern Maine Community College will also benefit from the fund as we employ masters prepared nurses in our rural hospitals to

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

serve as on-site faculty so nursing students complete their associate degree RN education at one of our hospitals in Dover Foxcroft, Pittsfield or Ellsworth and then stay in the local community employed as a registered nurse. Supporting nursing education is not limited to our rural hospitals, every Northern Light Health hospital provides thousands of clinical preceptor hours as we work with all of the nursing education programs in Maine.

The bill also provides competitive grants for innovative solutions to the workforce challenges, technological advances and earn as you learn programs to expand clinical education opportunities while the student employee is paid for their education time. We know that health care employer innovative approaches to reduce barriers to education and income while the student is learning results in a skilled workforce that will stay in a rural region caring for their community members.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this important legislation.