

4/3/2025

Dear Members of the Subcommittee

I would like to express my strong support for LD 1166. I am currently the Chief of Surgery and Director of the Oncology Institute at Central Maine Healthcare. I live and work in Lewiston Maine. As you all are aware these are trying times in the healthcare industry and especially here in Maine. All of our health systems have posted losses this past year. Layoffs, outsourcing, discontinuation of services and hospital closings have all threatened access to quality healthcare in Maine just this year alone. The Association of American Medical Colleges is projecting a physician shortage of up to 124,000 by 2034. Physician Assistants provide a critical resource for caring for our patients in this challenging environment. Every effort should be made to enhance the professional standing of our professional partners. Passing LD 1166 will serve to strengthen the commitment of the State of Maine to these trusted and caring healthcare providers.

Please entertain one anecdote of how important PA's are to the citizens of Maine. On October 25, 2023 I was on call at Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC) working into the evening with my lead PA Hannah Stonebreaker. As you all know within a short period of time CMMC received multiple critically injured victims. Ms. Stonebreaker and I joined the Emergency Room staff to care for these victims. Ms. Stonebreaker moved into the ambulance bay and participated in the initial triage of the victims. I resuscitated and took the most critically injured victim straight to the operating room. While I was operating on one of the victims, Ms. Stonebreaker was able to help triage and resuscitate other victims, communicate with me, and call in the other PA's from home. Within an hour, all of our general surgery, orthopedic and vascular surgery PA's were in the hospital working with my surgeons to deliver lifesaving care to the victims of this tragedy. Without our PA's that night and in the subsequent days and weeks, we could not have delivered the outstanding care those patients received.

PA's are a critical resource to all the health systems throughout Maine and perform a wide variety of functions, delivering primary care and participating in specialty medical and surgical care. They truly are partners and I think the term associate more truly describes the role they already fulfill.

Thank you for your attention,

Timothy Counihan, MD, FACS, FASCRS