

Growing up in Brewer, Maine, it was not a popular aspiration for young people to strive to become physicians. Despite being at the top of my high school class and having a strong interest in medicine, it didn't feel that attending medical school was something I could ever do. I started nursing school at eighteen years old and realized that a lot of the questions I had regarding disease were not being answered as a part of my curriculum. I began to realize that my role in the healthcare team would be better fulfilled as a physician.

Not coming from a family of physicians, I didn't understand how arduous (and expensive) this journey was about to become; however, I would certainly make the choice again. I applied to medical school and was accepted at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine. The euphoria of my dreams coming to fruition and the realization that I was going to be able to train in the place I aspired to practice was abruptly diminished when I realized how much tuition for four years (plus living expenses was going to be). Like many kids I grew up with, I started part time jobs in middle school and worked all throughout college to pay my bills. The grueling sixteen-hour study days and unpredictable clinical hours made it impossible to hold a job during medical school. I received a letter six weeks before day one of medical school informing me that I was a Doctor's for Maine's Future recipient.

I teared up reading that the financial hardship that had been lessened -- the scholarship I received during medical school from this fund drastically changed the amount of student debt I had to accrue. More than the money was the emotional effect it had on me. As I sat next to people with master's degrees and Ivy league educations, it made me feel the state of Maine thought I deserved to be there as well. I thought about my grandfather who travels eight hours round-trip from Madawaska to Bangor to see his cardiologist. I thought about patients who I worked with who were unable to see a specialist because the only one in the area didn't take MaineCare.

This scholarship allowed me to experience the different niches of medicine openly without the intense pressure to go into the highest paying fields because I was not graduating with nearly as much student debt as I would have without the support of DFMF. This scholarship truly altered my career trajectory. I am an Internal Medicine resident at Maine Medical Center where I hope to eventually become a hospitalist. This means I will not be pursuing any further specialization and will provide care to any adults in the state regardless of their insurance or ability to pay. I plan to practice in Maine. Without DFMF, I would feel the stress to pursue higher paying specialties or to move out of state for higher paying jobs as the student debt burden would be insurmountable. To not fund DFMF would be a great disservice to young physicians and would further exacerbate our state's significant physician shortage.

I am unable to deliver this testimony in person today because I am covering the transplant service at Maine Medical Center. I am working with nephrologists that care for every single patient in the state who has a kidney transplant. These patients are real people who would suffer from fewer physicians practicing in Maine which would be a guarantee if DFMF were to no longer