

Letter in Support of LD 581
“An Act to Fund the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program”
Submitted by Jane Branch

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of Joint Standing Committee on Education, my name is Jane Branch, and I am a third-year medical student in Portland, Maine. I am writing in strong support of LD581, “An Act to Fund the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program”

I was raised in Orrington, Maine, a small town just outside of Bangor. Since I was a child, I wanted to be a physician. Only 6 states in this country do not have their own public medical school and Maine is one of them; so, when I left for college, I honestly didn't expect to return for my medical education. But I was fortunate enough to be accepted to the Tufts Maine Track Program, which has a class size of only 40 students each year, and that changed everything.

I am beyond grateful to be working with and learning from patients and doctors in the state of Maine. Importantly, training here has exposed me to the unique political and socioeconomic challenges our communities face. Because I train in Maine, with clinical experiences not just in Portland, but as far down east as Lubec, I have developed an intimate understanding of the health systems currently in place in Maine, and the disparities that need addressing. Because I train in Maine, I have been able to engage in conversations with physician and student colleagues regarding healthcare reform solutions for the state. Because I train in Maine, I *care* about the longevity of our health system, and I plan to stick around to improve it.

Medical students from private institutions like Tufts and UNECOM on average face a debt upwards of \$265,000. As you might imagine, many of us are hesitant to consider a vital specialty like primary care because of these daunting financial constraints. While I am not personally a recipient, I have seen how powerful the Doctors for Maine's Futures Scholarship can be in lightening this burden.

Maine is currently facing a severe shortage of physicians. Funding for the Doctors for Maine's Futures Scholarship not only alleviates the student debt preventing doctors from entering important fields like primary care, but it also helps grow Maine's next generation of physician leaders. Now more than ever, we need them. As the Legislature seeks to improve access to health care in the state, I implore you to consider scholarships like the Doctors for Maine's Futures Scholarship essential. Supporting LD 581 and fully funding this scholarship program is a vote for restoring the health of the state.

Sincerely,

Jane Branch
TUSM-MMC MD Candidate, 2026