



**Testimony of Joe Baty, MaineHealth
In Support Of
LD 1956, “An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Competitive Skills
Scholarship Program and Establish the Community Workforce Connections
Program”
May 13, 2025**

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, I am Joe Baty, Workforce Development Manager at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1956, “An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program and Establish the Community Workforce Connections Program.”

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit hospital system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. MaineHealth is also the state’s largest private employer with over 24,000 care team members, but we are facing a workforce crisis that is significantly impacting access to care. We are currently recruiting for nearly 2,500 positions, including 117 physicians and over 540 nurses.

MaineHealth, like many healthcare organizations has a high need for skilled and qualified staff, in a wide variety of roles. Pathways to careers in healthcare can be complex, and the role of programs like the proposed workforce bridge program have vital importance in broadening awareness of options and supporting Mainers in their pursuit of employment.

We have seen that there are often barriers to people pursuing pathways that result in meaningful and important work. Difficulties such as transportation, childcare, financial assistance impact Mainer’s ability to engage with career pathways. Any programs that reduce friction in Mainers’ ability to pursue those goals is a benefit to MaineHealth’s ability to provide the best possible care and thus to the state as a whole.

MaineHealth has had success working with programs that have provided workforce navigation services previously. Having trusted intermediaries that can vouch for MaineHealth as an employer allows people to take a leap of faith that their individual investment of resources is worth doing. The complexities of healthcare often require training, asking Mainers to travel to education sites, invest time in their learning and growth to obtain a license, and spend funds in pursuit of a career. That choice may result in long term benefit rather than short, and is a difficult decision to make without guidance and support. Agencies such as Peer Workforce Guides have been vital in relaying information, and helping Mainers choose the right path for them.

The legislation before you today solidifies a commitment to helping potential workforce find their way through education, employment and financial systems in order to give back to the communities that they live in through employment. This bill would enhance MaineHealth’s ability to continue its work in providing exceptional care, in pursuit of making our communities the healthiest in America. I ask you to support this legislation.