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**Re: Letter of Support for LD 1803**

To: Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services of the Maine State  
Legislature

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and Committee Members:

As a surgeon practicing in Scarborough, Maine, I am writing in support of LD 1803, legislation that seeks to modernize and appropriately expand the scope of practice for optometrists in Maine. This bill is a forward-thinking, patient-centered approach that aligns with the broader evolution of the healthcare landscape, an evolution I have witnessed firsthand across multiple disciplines.

Over the course of my medical career, I have seen dramatic changes in how healthcare is delivered and by whom. Nurse practitioners and physician assistants, once considered limited in their clinical reach, are now essential partners in delivering quality care. I work with them daily as colleagues in my breast surgery practice. In rural and underserved regions within the state they are especially important. These professionals have successfully taken on expanded roles with safety, competence, and effectiveness, improving access while maintaining high standards of care.

Optometry is not different.

Optometrists are highly trained healthcare providers. Their education includes rigorous clinical training that prepares them to manage a wide range of eye conditions and diseases. Denying these professionals the ability to fully utilize their expertise, especially in an era of increasing

patient demand and provider shortages, does a disservice to both patients and the healthcare system at large.

LD 1803 recognizes this reality. It is not about replacing ophthalmologists or other specialists—it is about building a collaborative, team-based approach that meets patients where they are, reduces wait times, and ensures timely access to necessary eye care. Modernizing optometrists' scope of practice is not a radical departure from tradition. It is a natural, evidence-based evolution that mirrors what we have already embraced in other specialties.

As a surgeon, I understand the importance of having the right provider, at the right time, for the right patient. I also understand the importance of inter-professional respect and collaboration. Supporting LD 1803 ensures that patients in Maine will benefit from the full range of capable providers working together in a modernized system that reflects the realities of 21st-century medicine.

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1803 and take this important step toward a more responsive and sustainable healthcare future.

Sincerely,

**Elizabeth S.M. DesJardin MD**  
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