

Testimony of Hanna Zetterstrand - Robinson, DMSc, PA-C

In support of LD 2088, "An Act to Increase Access to Primary Care Provided by Physician Associates".

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee, my name is Hanna Zetterstrand - Robinson. I am a Bar Harbor resident and practice medicine at Mount Desert Island Hospital. Today, I am testifying in support of LD 2088, "An Act to Increase Access to Primary Care Provided by Physician Associates."

I strongly support LD 2088 and the elimination of the practice agreement requirement for physician associates (PAs) working in non-physician-owned practices. Since graduating from the University of New England in 2013, I have devoted my entire medical career to serving the people of Maine. Throughout my decade of practice specializing in orthopedic medicine, I have developed a unique approach that emphasizes patient education and conservative, evidence-based treatment strategies. This model allows me to establish comprehensive therapeutic relationships with patients and address their musculoskeletal conditions through nonsurgical interventions that prioritize long-term functional outcomes.

Eliminating the practice agreement requirement would significantly expand access to musculoskeletal care for Maine patients. Rural Maine faces substantial challenges in accessing specialty medical services, and PAs are uniquely positioned to address these critical care gaps. I have developed a comprehensive vision for a nonsurgical orthopedic and integrative medicine clinic that would serve patients whose conditions do not require surgical intervention. This clinic would integrate physical therapists, occupational therapists, massage therapists, and chiropractors—all of whom currently practice autonomously without physician oversight. Additionally, such a practice could offer mobile house-call services to patients with transportation barriers, thereby further expanding access for underserved populations.

However, the current practice agreement requirement presents significant obstacles to establishing this needed service. While PAs possess the clinical competence and legal authority to own and operate independent practices, the mandatory practice agreement creates substantial practical and financial barriers. The inherent instability of depending on a collaborative agreement that could dissolve unexpectedly presents an untenable business risk for launching an independent practice. Furthermore, identifying a willing physician collaborator and absorbing the associated costs represent additional prohibitive challenges that have prevented me from pursuing this model of care delivery.

LD 2088 represents a meaningful step toward addressing Maine's healthcare access crisis, particularly in rural and underserved communities. By passing LD 2088, legislation would empower qualified PAs to deliver the care our communities desperately need. I respectfully urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2088 and help expand access to quality care for all Maine residents. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hanna Zetterstrand', written over the printed name.

Hanna Zetterstrand - Robinson DMSc, PA-C