

Testimony of Jaime Knowlton

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 Jaime Knowlton. I am a resident of Greenville, Maine, and I practice medicine in dermatology. Today, I am testifying in support of LD 2088 “An Act to Increase Access to Primary Care Provided by Physician Associates”.

I have been practicing as a Physician Associate (PA) for 15 years, and started my own business, True North Skin, 1 1/2 years ago. I continue to practice clinical dermatology and serve my community in a specialty that I love, and I am passionate about. Starting any small business in rural Maine can be scary and an unpredictable venture. When calculating start-up costs, and the financial risks and benefits, one of the biggest barriers that was unexpectedly challenging was the Practice Agreement needed to open my own practice. In addition to finding a provider as a collaborating Physician, gaining board approval for me to provide dermatological and aesthetic services - some of these services are those that associate degree level nurses can provide in Maine without any physician oversight – was also challenging. The time and cost in this process took 2 months, delaying the start of my practice. The continued cost incurred for the practice agreement continues to be a significant monthly overhead cost. I am fortunate enough to continue to work within a hospital-based system part time, however if I was relying solely on my own practice this would be an uncertain endeavor with potentially significant financial consequences. What if my collaborating Physician’s ME license expired? What if something were to happen to them unexpectedly? If all the sudden I did not have my collaborating Physician I would have to cease operations until a new practice agreement was in place and approved by the board. This is not a financially feasible or sustainable model for any company, let alone a medical practice. It is certainly a huge barrier for PAs who want to open their own practice but are rightfully worried about the potential losses they would incur if this were to happen, and it is an even bigger loss to the patients they are serving but would have to abruptly discontinue care until the paper documentation is resolved.

My husband is also a PA practicing in rural Maine, and we often discuss the need for more access to primary care in our community and surrounding rural areas. Opening our own practice has been a topic of discussion on multiple occasions but the current barriers in place as well as the challenges I faced in starting my own practice on a part time basis surrounding the practice agreement has been the biggest deterrent.

Please consider these challenges I have personally faced and presented today. You have an opportunity to make a difference by eliminating antiquated barriers and allow PAs to practice in their fullest capacity in Maine, allowing them to expand access to care and better meet our patient' needs.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Knowlton, PA-C".

Jaime Knowlton, MMS, PA-C

True North Skin

Greenville, Maine