

Testimony in Support: LD 2088 “An Act to Increase Access to Primary Care Provided by Physician Associates”.

Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Service Committee -January 25, 2026

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, my name is Maureen Harpell, RN, MSN, FNP. I am a Bridgton resident, and I practiced as a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) in Naples Maine from 1999-2022 in a primary care setting. I have precepted NP and PA students throughout the years and I am aware of their education and training which is comprehensive. I am submitting testimony in support of LD 2088 “An Act to Increase Access to Primary Care provided by Physician Associates”.

As a nurse practitioner who works closely with physician associates (PAs) and understands the value in care they provide, especially in the rural areas of our state, I support the elimination of the practice agreement requirement for PAs working in a non-physician owned practice. This bill still maintains the requirement for physician collaboration for PAs practicing with less than 4,000 hours of clinical practice while also allowing PAs to practice to their fullest potential regardless of clinical setting. Additionally, particularly in our state, LD 2088’s proposed changes promote greater parity with nurse practitioners (NPs) who under Maine law, since 1995, can practice independent of a physician regardless of the practice setting, after a two-year supervision period. Both NPs and PAs remain deeply dedicated to revolutionizing healthcare in our nation through collaborative, patient-focused medical care. The collaborative nature of our healthcare system would not change with this new law but instead this bill allows for more opportunities for PAs to increase access to care for their patients while also providing them the option to practice similarly to other providers in the state.

As you know, primary care services are often difficult for patients to access in Maine due to a paucity of providers (including physicians as well as NPs and PAs). Many healthcare providers have moved to a direct care model, and while this is beneficial for the providers, it unfortunately decreases the number of patients on a patient panel and thus effectively limits primary care access. More healthcare providers leads to greater access to care. We remain united with our healthcare colleagues in a shared mission to provide safe and effective care to all patients through a patient-centered and team-based approach while continuing to be thoughtful in how we approach solutions to access to care which is why I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 2088.

Respectfully,

Maureen L. Harpell RN, MSN, FNP