



**Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth  
Funding for the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program  
February 19, 2026**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Services and Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Sarah Calder, Senior Government Affairs Director at MaineHealth, and am here to urge you to include funding to continue the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program.

MaineHealth is a not-for-profit, integrated health system whose vision is "Working together so our communities are the healthiest in America." We are further committed to a mission of providing high-quality affordable health care, educating tomorrow's caregivers and researching better ways to provide care. MaineHealth includes a Level 1 trauma medical center, eight additional licensed acute care hospitals, comprehensive pediatric care services, an extensive network of community outpatient and inpatient behavioral health care, as well as home health, hospice and senior care services. With more than 2,000 employed providers and approximately 24,000 care team members, MaineHealth provides preventive care, diagnosis and treatment to 1.1 million residents of Maine and New Hampshire.

Maine Medical Center (MMC) partnered with the Tufts University School of Medicine (TUSM) in 2008 to start an allopathic medical school program designed to address the shortage of physicians in Maine, particularly in our rural areas, and to give Maine student's access to high-quality medical education at a tuition cost similar to that of a state-sponsored program. The unique Maine Track program offers a rigorous training program that exposes students to rural clinical practice from day one and provides students firsthand experience providing care in local communities throughout the state including such towns as Madison, Caribou, Belfast, Wiscasset, Richmond, and Norway.

Maine Medical Center also guarantees that at least 20 Maine students in each class receive scholarships of \$25,000 per year, totaling more than \$2 million each year. The scholarships have been raised through the generosity of private donors, local companies, and, very importantly, the Doctors for Maine's Future scholarship program, which was created by the 124th Maine Legislature and administered by the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). The Doctors for Maine's Future scholarship program is a public-private partnership between the State and Tufts – Maine Track and the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, as each school is required to match the state-funded scholarships, 1:1.

Because the Legislature did not fully fund the Doctors for Maine's Future scholarship program in the FAME section of the Biennial Budget, the current number of scholarships will reduce to 2 students at each institution in the next few years. It is important to note that the reduction in scholarships also reduces the number of scholarships required to be matched by both schools. This will result in fewer scholarships for Maine-based students. LD 581, which provides the

absolute minimum funding necessary to maintain the current number of scholarships, is currently sitting on the Special Appropriations Table.

The Doctors for Maine's Future scholarship program has been very successful in achieving its goal of encouraging Maine students to enter medical school, and, it is clear that the Maine Track program is critically important in producing local physicians:

- 74% of Maine Track students who completed their residency in Maine are practicing in Maine. This is exceptionally high in comparison to [data](#) from the Association of American Medical Colleges', which found that a 58.6% of the individuals who completed residency training from 2014 to 2023 are practicing in the state where they did their residency training.
- Nationally, the [number](#) of individuals applying to medical school declined by over 7% last year, but Maine saw an increase of 8% from the year prior.
- The Maine Track Class of 2025 includes 42 students—20 of these students grew up in Maine.
- To date, 429 physicians over 11 classes have graduated from the Maine Track Program. 278 were from Maine.
- The program is accessible. We are very proud to offer a Maine Track Early Assurance Program for sophomores at Bates College, Bowdoin College, Colby College, and all University of Maine campuses. Additionally, The MMC-TUSM acceptance rate last year for Mainers into the Maine Track was 47%. For those from away, our acceptance rate was only 17%. This compares very favorably to TUSM's overall acceptance rate of approximately 4% and the average national acceptance rate of approximately 5.5%.
- The Maine Track program has come full circle. Graduates are now faculty teaching current students. Caleb Swanberg, MD, class of 2015, who has spoken to you in the past, precepts students in Family Medicine when they rotate in Caribou for nine months. The site director for our rural site in Norway is a former graduate. Another graduate from the class of 2023 is a second year resident in the newly formed Rural Track of the Psychiatry Residency program at Maine Medical Center. There are countless other examples.

As the Legislature seeks to increase access to health care, including behavioral health care, it is critical that investments be made in increasing the pipeline of future health care workers. The Doctors for Maine's Future scholarship program has proven to be incredibly successful in supporting Maine students who attend medical school in Maine. Please support continuation of this unique program that is building the physician workforce to take care of future generations of Mainer people.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.