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Testimony of the Maine Osteopathic Association
Before the Committee on Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

In Reference to:
**LD 129, Resolve, to Direct the University of Maine System to Study the
Feasibility of Establishing a Public Allopathic Medical School in
Penobscot County**

Public Hearing: Thursday, February 2nd, 1:00PM
Cross Building, Room 208

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Committee on Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing approximately 400 osteopathic physicians as well as more than 700 residents and students. Our mission is to “serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.”

We are pleased to provide testimony neither for nor against LD 129.

This resolve directs the University of Maine System to conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a public allopathic medical school in Penobscot County.

As an organization, we support access to quality healthcare for Mainers, and so it follows that we support adequate access to robust training programs in Maine so that more physicians are available to care for our population. To that end we would welcome the opportunity to lend our input as part of such a feasibility study.

We would like to highlight some key figures and considerations:

- The osteopathic profession has a long history of providing care where patients lack doctors-- 57% of active DOs practice in the primary care specialties of family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics and University of New England (UNE COM) has been a consistent provider of Maine’s rural doctors.

- Maine currently provides more than 200 medical school graduates each year via University of New England’s College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNE COM) in Biddeford (accredited for 165 students per class year) and the Maine Tufts track (50 students per class year). This equates to more than 645 undergraduate medical education (UME) trainees at any given time in the state.

-UNE COM has recently broken ground on a new facility on UNE's Portland, ME campus that will allow them to expand their current capacity and train even more osteopathic physicians than they are currently accredited for.

-Maine has only 5 teaching hospitals, and therefore limited clinical training placements for medical students. UNE COM has worked hard to establish relationships with hospitals, group practice settings, independent physicians and many others to provide diverse clinical training opportunities for their third and fourth year students but still some need to get clinical experience in clinical sites out of state. Anecdotally, we have also heard that the most popular among these are those in Central and Southern Maine (not those in Penobscot County).

-Residency, internship and fellowship training slots in Maine are also limited, but critical for medical school graduates to complete in order to become fully licensed and qualified physicians. There are a total of 301 post-graduate medical training (GME) slots in Maine according to recent data from the Association of American Medical Colleges¹. Given that residency and fellowship programs are completed over several years, this means that only a portion of these slots become available to incoming GME applicants every year. Limited slots mean more competition for Maine medical school graduates.

-The data show that upwards of 50% of Maine GME trainees end up practicing in the state. In contrast, only about 18% of undergraduate medical education (UME) trainees in the state actually return to practice in the state.² While difficult to know for sure, this may be because they were unable to complete their GME training in Maine.

To that end, we would urge the committee, and those involved in this future study to consider the long-term effects of adding medical school graduates to a state that is already lacking in post-graduate training slots. If we want to be able to retain more physicians to care for Mainers in our state, we need to focus on providing opportunities for terminal training in these areas, since we know that statistically speaking that is where physicians choose to practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our input. Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@mainedo.org if you have any questions. Thank you.

References:

1. Association of American Medical Colleges "State-by-State Graduate Medical Education Data" <https://www.aamc.org/advocacy-policy/state-state-graduate-medical-education-data>
2. Association of American Medical Colleges "Maine Physician Workforce Profile 2019-2020" <https://www.aamc.org/media/58216/download>