

4/6/2023

Testimony in Support:

LD 904 "An Act Supporting the Rural Health Care Workforce in Maine"

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

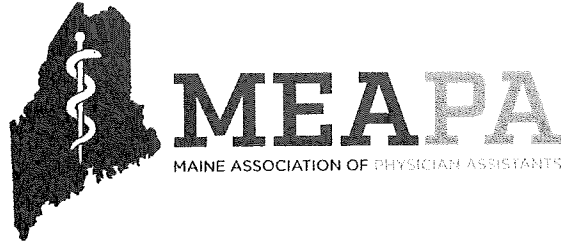
Senator Baldacci, Representatives Meyer, and the Committee on Health and Human Services, Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kimberly Caldwell, I'm a masters degree trained and board certified Physician Assistant (PA) and today I testify on behalf of the Maine Association of Physician Assistants (MEAPA), where I serve as the Vice President and President Elect. I currently practice in Lewiston and reside in Auburn.

I am testifying today in support of LD 904 and to ask that you amend the bill to include Physician Assistants since Maine PA's are also poised to help address the rural healthcare shortage. In fact, in 2020, LD1660, An Act to Increase Access to Physician Assistant Care, was signed into law with the goal to bolster access to these quality healthcare practitioners, particularly in underserved rural communities. This law ensures Maine PAs are able to practice at the height of their training, experience and expertise, where they can continue to function as a member of the healthcare team, from within a practice. This law also allows PA's to practice independently, following 4,000 hours of supervised and supported practice, by filing a practice agreement with the Board of Licensure in Medicine and/or the Osteopathic Board.

I want to highlight Maine's only PA program, which is at the University of New England (UNE). This program is chronically challenged to identify willing preceptors (physicians, PAs or NPs). UNE's PA program is unique, with its focus on primary care and an emphasis on rural, underserved, and geriatric

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patient populations. At UNE PA training consists of 12 rigorous months of didactic and simulation-based learning followed by 12 months of clinical rotations, where PA's are placed throughout the state of Maine from Presque Isle to Stonington to Millinocket to Bridgton etc.

The UNE PA Program deliberately prepares the PA for rural primary care practice. Approximately 70% of graduates from UNE's PA Program stay to practice in Maine. In this way, PA students and residents of rural Maine alike would benefit from an incentive program bolstering precepting opportunities and furthering the development of longitudinal training programs for PA students.

As Vice President and President-Elect of MEAPA, I am fortunate to be in a position to advocate for Maine PA's, their patients and support the next generation of PA's in training. We agree that rural Maine healthcare is suffering from provider shortages and believe we should introduce as many healthcare provider student types as possible, to solve this issue.

I testify today, after discussion with the board of directors of MEAPA and on behalf of all PA's in Maine, to recommend you consider the following addition to the Act's current language:

Section 3.

"E. Support the expansion of rural primary care clinical rotations for Physician Assistant students."

Thank you for your consideration and interest in solving the rural healthcare shortages in Maine.

I'm happy to try to answer any questions.

<https://trackbill.com/bill/maine-legislative-document-1660-an-act-to-improve-access-to-physician-assistant-care/1743820/>

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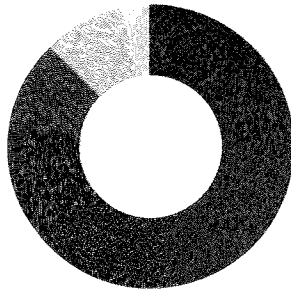
MAINE PA PRACTICE PROFILE

Number of PAs in Maine:
900+

Number of PAs in the U.S.:
159,000

Source: NCCPA

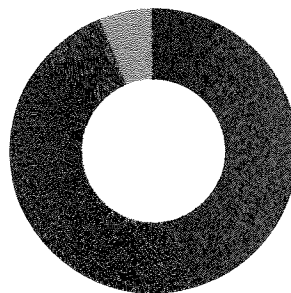
Percent of PAs by Specialty in Maine



- 24.2% Family Medicine
- 21.2% Surgical Subspecialties
- 16.7% Emergency Medicine
- 12.1% All Other Specialties
- 10.6% Urgent Care
- 9.1% Internal Medicine Subspecialties
- 3% General Peds, General Internal Med

27.3% of PAs specialize in Primary Care

Percent of PAs by Setting in Maine



- 45.5% Hospital Settings
- 40.9% Physician Office or Clinic
- 7.6% Urgent Care Center
- 6.1% Other Settings

24.2% of PAs are employed by a Physician Group or Solo Practice

In Maine

- ▣ 35.5% of PAs serve in rural areas
- ▣ A typical PA completes 51 patient visits per week
- ▣ A typical PA is on call 48 hours per month