

## **Testimony in Support of LD 1797, An Act to Expand Maine's Health Care Workforce by Expanding Educational Opportunities and Providing Tax Credits**

May 2, 2023

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. My name is Bethany Miles and I am a rising 3<sup>rd</sup> year medical student at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNE COM). Thank you for considering this testimony in support of LD 1797.

I was born and raised in Maine where my family has lived for generations. Growing up, I was drawn to the healthcare field much like my mother, a pediatric nurse practitioner, and my aunt, a pharmacist with her own pharmacy in an underserved Maine community. As a Mainer I never considered it unusual to travel long distances for anything, especially healthcare services, but the implications of this became clearer to me as I grew into adulthood. Even today, my grandmother travels several hours to receive IVIG infusions and meet with her neurologist, and an hour just to see her primary care provider.

Before medical school, I was a registered nurse. I received my bachelor's degree from the University of Maine and I was excited to try and make a difference for the health of Maine people like my grandmother. While in nursing school, it was obvious to me that the "nursing shortage" being talked about was certainly not for lack of those wanting to be nurses, but rather the staff and resources to train them. Even in practice, the turnover of nurses was very high, especially during the pandemic, as people left to take on travel contracts for higher pay or even leave healthcare altogether. It was becoming harder to "hold the line", and I was compelled to do more for Maine people than I felt I could do as a nurse, so I applied to medical school.

I applied to UNE COM because of its presence in Maine and the large number of brilliant physicians it provides for us. As a mother of three young children the support of being close to family during medical school was also paramount. At face value, it did not necessarily make financial sense to pursue this. In fact, I could probably write a thesis on all the hurdles and hardships I was told I would face being an older medical student with children. However, I believed enough in what I could accomplish for Maine people on the other side of this journey that I put my faith in the process, and that process is what made it possible for me. Resources like the Doctors for Maine's Future scholarship and Maine Health Professions Loan program have eased the financial burden such that I can afford to stay and practice in Maine. Furthermore, being guaranteed a Maine clinical site placement as part of my scholarship allows for me to begin my clinical training in the same area in which I intend to practice.

I know there are many others out there, Mainers and Mainers-at-heart alike, that are more than willing to step up to serve the healthcare needs of our people if given the chance.

Expansion of resources and new programs to accommodate education of more healthcare professionals for Maine and encourage their retention provides this chance. As a mother, nurse, medical student, and future physician, taking care of people is what I do. I believe this legislation is a monumental step in taking better care of Maine people by investing in the means to do so.

Thank you,

Bethany Miles  
Gorham, Maine