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Mayo Hospital  
Mercy Hospital  
Northern Light Health Foundation  
Northern Light Pharmacy  
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

## LD 2075 An Act to Protect Health Care Workers from HIV

### Testimony in Support January 11, 2024

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with more than 10,000 employees statewide.

This bill addresses the consent challenge that occurs when a health care worker experiences an occupational exposure to HIV in a health care setting and the patient is not able to consent in time to start appropriate medical treatment for the exposed employee. For context in fiscal year 2023 Northern Light Health conducted 134 HIV tests on exposed employees/healthcare students in training. For these exposures we were able to obtain the consent needed to test and based on the results, start time sensitive medical treatment. In our experience it is not often that we cannot obtain consent but the risk of not obtaining a timely consent is significant. The preferred post exposure prophylaxis treatment for a healthy adult must be administered within 72 hours of the exposure.

This bill establishes criteria to test without consent when we have made a good faith effort to obtain consent to test a blood sample from the source patient, but we are unable to obtain the consent needed. Our Director of Occupational Medicine has been in practice many years and recalls two instances when we were unable to obtain the consent needed and this bill establishes the criteria to ensure that moving forward we would be able to test the blood sample so treatment for the exposed healthcare worker, if appropriate, can begin.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this important legislation.