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Governor

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TESTIMONY OF ANNE L. HEAD

COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL AND FINANCIAL REGULATION

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 2265

***“An Act to Implement Recommendations Resulting from the State Government Evaluation Act Review of the
Department of Professional and Financial Regulation”***

Sponsored by Representative Tiffany Roberts

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INNOVATION, DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT & BUSINESS**

Public Hearing: March 15, 2024

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Members of the IDEA Committee, my name is Anne Head and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation. I am here today to speak in support of LD 2265 on behalf of the Department and the Administration.

First, I would like to thank the IDEA committee for their appreciation of the hard work of the Department as shared in the GEA report and their interest in forwarding some initiatives from that report.

As I discussed with the Committee during the GEA presentation and its follow-up, the recommendation to give the Commissioner limited powers during a declared emergency powers to waive licensing requirements for a limited time emanated from our experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and then also following the Lewiston shooting.

For example, during the declared COVID public health emergency (PHE) we faced a need to bring additional health care workers into the state including doctors and respiratory therapists. Since a Maine license is required by statute to provide health care to individuals in this state, that requirement could only be waived by the laborious executive order process. Similarly, Maine licensees were challenged to take their statutorily required continuing ed courses and those types of requirements could only be waived by executive order. An example outside of the COVID 19 PHE is the tragedy following the Lewiston shooting which significantly impacted Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing community. We had offers of volunteers from throughout the country but could not access their services because they did not have a Maine license.

The proposed statutory language limits these waivers to declared federal or state emergencies and for a limited period of time so these waivers would be infrequently and carefully exercised.

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The bill also proposes to statutorily memorialize a Deputy Commissioner position within the Department. As you know I have a person ably assisting me to whom I have given the acting title of Deputy Commissioner and who is, as you know, doing a phenomenal job. But it is appropriate to have that position in statute like other Deputy Commissioners identified in the Title 2 section, as proposed. Additionally, this change acknowledges the hard work ahead of this Department to modernize its organizational structure to meet the needs of the legislature and the changing economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions.