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Testimony from the University of New England Before the Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs and the Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs

LD 210, the Governor’s Biennial Budget Proposal (Doctors for Maine’s Future)

Public Hearing: February 7, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Committees on Appropriations & Financial Affairs and Education & Cultural Affairs, my name is Dr. Jane Carreiro, Dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine at the University of New England. I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of UNE, requesting that the Legislature fund the Doctors for Maine’s Future program. This is an effective program that attracts and retains physician talent to rural Maine communities. Unfortunately, no funding was dedicated to this important program in the proposed biennial budget.

Every year since this program was established in 2009, dozens of Maine students attending UNE’s College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) have received this scholarship, which provides \$25,000 in tuition assistance for each of their four years of medical school, totaling \$100,000 in aid. This helps reduce their considerable debt load and encourages them to stay in Maine to practice after graduation and their residencies. UNE COM students who receive the Doctors for Maine’s Future scholarships are placed in the Dirigo Scholars track program which focuses on rural primary care workforce development. As Dirigo Scholars, they are assigned a rural clinical mentor; participate in focused training at Northern Light EMMC during years 1 and 2; are enrolled in the Care for Underprivileged Pathways (CUP) program; and complete third year rotations at Northern Light EMMC.

Sixty-two percent of UNE’s Doctors for Maine’s Future graduates are now employed in Maine. This includes many students who had to complete their residencies outside of Maine due to lack of residency slots here, but chose to move back to Maine after to live and work. Each year, we hear from these students that their desire to stay in Maine is strong, and their gratitude for this assistance even stronger.

Their passion for medicine and Maine is the strongest case that can be made for renewing funding for this important program. I can attest that this program is a valuable tool for convincing Maine students to study and train in their home state. Every dollar from the State of Maine through FAME has to be matched by private donations, which doubles the number of scholarships that can be awarded. There are few such public/private partnerships that are more compelling or more successful. For the benefit of future Maine students, Maine physicians, and the Maine citizens they will graduate to care for, I encourage you to include funding in the budget for the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship program.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jane E. Carreiro
Dean, College of Osteopathic Medicine