

**University of Maine System Testimony Regarding
LD 377, An Act to Establish a University of Maine Medical School and to Dedicate
Funds from Raising the Cigarette Tax to the School — Presented by UMS Chief
External & Governmental Affairs Officer Samantha Warren — March 3, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs: My name is Sam Warren and I am the Chief External & Governmental Affairs Officer for the University of Maine System (UMS).

In 2018, the University of Maine launched its Institute of Medicine to coordinate its accelerating activities and partnerships in health and life science education and cutting-edge research. UMaine is also the degree-granting institution that anchors Maine's Graduate School of Biomedical Science and Engineering, an innovative, multi-institutional education and research consortium that also includes The Jackson Laboratory, the MaineHealth Institute of Research, the MDI Biological Laboratory, and the University of New England.

In FY24, Maine's public universities produced 930 healthcare graduates and brought tens of millions of dollars in related research investment to the state, mostly through UMaine — the state's only institution to have achieved the prestigious Carnegie R1 classification for very high research activity — and the University of Southern Maine.

As returning members of this Committee will recall, in response to a critical shortage of physicians, especially in rural Maine, and in recognition of our System's statewide leadership in healthcare workforce development and research, the 131st Legislature provided \$75,000 to UMS to study the feasibility of establishing a public allopathic medical school in Penobscot County, likely associated with UMaine. Supporters of the enabling legislation included the Maine Hospital Association, the Maine Primary Care Association, and Northern Light Health.

Following a competitive request last year that generated multiple proposals, UMS selected Tripp Umbach to assist with the study. Tripp Umbach has worked with most medical schools in the nation over the past three decades, including in Maine and other rural states. The firm stood out for its extensive experience with innovative graduate medical education models like multi-state medical education programs, health system-driven medical schools, and state pathway programs with established out-of-state medical schools.

The feasibility study got underway last fall. In addition to detailed discussions with administrators and researchers in our System, it has included interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders. These include, but are not limited to, leaders of statewide healthcare organizations, including MaineHealth and Northern Light Health; state and federal healthcare agencies, including the Maine Department of Health & Human Services and VA

Maine; federally qualified health centers; tribal healthcare services providers; research institutions, including The Jackson Laboratory; other medical education providers, including the University of New England and the Tufts University Maine Track; and statewide associations, including those representing hospitals, nursing homes, physicians, and primary care providers.

UMS expects Tripp Umbach to deliver the feasibility study to us late this summer and that it will detail whether a public medical school is necessary for Maine and what resources would be required if such an initiative is deemed essential, including funding, personnel, and research and clinical laboratories and equipment. The study is due to the Legislature in November.

Until the feasibility study is complete, it would be premature for UMS to take a position on LD 377, and we respectfully request this bill be carried over to the Second Regular Session.

We appreciate that Senator Baldacci and other Maine policymakers and healthcare leaders see UMS as the solution to the state's healthcare workforce shortages, which are particularly acute in rural regions where our public universities are strongly rooted and include the need for more physicians. We also recognize that **our System is chronically underfunded and burdened by \$1.6 billion in deferred maintenance and that substantial new resources would be required to start and sustain a public medical school.** We look forward to Tripp Umbach's findings and to better understanding the opportunities for the System and its statewide partners to build upon our strengths to further improve healthcare access and outcomes for Maine and beyond.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the University of Maine System and I welcome your questions.