

STATE OF MAINE
BOARD OF OSTEOPATHIC LICENSURE
142 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0142



TESTIMONY OF PETER P. MICHAUD
PUBLIC MEMBER
BOARD OF OSTEOPATHIC LICENSURE
DEPARTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL AND FINANCIAL REGULATION
in support of

**Resolve: to Direct the Board of Licensure in Medicine and the Board of Osteopathic Licensure to
Conduct a Study Regarding the Feasibility of Combining Those Boards**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services
March 13, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.**

Senator Bailey, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee: my name is Peter Michaud, and I am one of three public members of the Board of Osteopathic Licensure (Osteopathic Board). I am testifying in support of LD 805.

Our Board licenses and regulates osteopathic physicians (DOs) and physician assistants in Maine. The Board comprises eleven members: six DO physicians, two physician assistants in active practice, and three public members. The Board's mission is to protect the public by requiring that licensees be professional, competent, and ethical. We accomplish this by ensuring that only properly qualified applicants are licensed to treat Maine patients; by investigating and adjudicating complaints against licensees for claimed unprofessional, incompetent, or unethical behaviors; and by enacting rules to govern certain professional practices. Our Board has a single staff member, the Executive Secretary, who together with a part-time consumer assistance specialist provides administrative support to all aspects of our operations.

Like the Osteopathic Board, the Maine Board of Licensure in Medicine (the MD Board) licenses and regulates a specific group of physicians – MD physicians – and physician assistants. The MD Board's composition is identical to the Osteopathic Board's: six MD physicians, two physician assistants in active practice, and three public members. Its mission is the same: to protect the public. Unlike the Osteopathic Board, the MD Board has *ten* employees to provide administrative support.

Each year the number of osteopathic physicians in Maine and around the United States increases. In 1980, Maine had 179 licensed DO physicians; in 2000 the number was 249. Today, there are 1,820 DOs licensed in Maine. For MDs, the number of licensees is around 8,000.

Maine is one of only 12 states in the nation that have separate physician boards. The other 38 have unitary boards.

LD 805 has one purpose only: to *study the possibility* of a merger of the two physician boards into a single board to regulate all physicians and physician assistants in Maine, with the protection of the public being the paramount purpose. In recent years the two boards have collaborated in enacting several joint rules to create single standards for their licensees, including: Chapter 2, Joint Rule Regarding Physician Assistants; Chapter 10, Joint Rule Regarding Sexual Misconduct; Chapter 11, Joint Rule Regarding Telehealth Standards of Practice; Chapter 12, Joint Rule Regarding Office Based Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder; and Chapter 21, Joint Rule Regarding Use of Controlled Substances for Treatment of Pain. These joint rules reflect the reality

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that DOs and MDs practice in the same settings, with the same patients, and according to the same standards. Their work is identical. Today, DOs and MDs train side-by-side in the same residency programs and practice side-by-side in the same health care facilities and practices.

This bill is a joint effort of the two boards to examine the possibility of merging into a single board with the ability to better protect the public by combining the staffing resources of both boards, as well as to utilize the expertise of physicians from both disciplines. There is significant work to be done before we can determine whether a merger is feasible and practical. The boards have formed a workgroup comprising members of both boards. The workgroup meetings have been open to public observation, and stakeholders and the public are notified of the dates and times of the meetings. They are a sort of board-based precursor to the work of the broader study group we are asking you to enact. The boards will continue to be transparent during this process, in keeping with our mutual purpose of protecting the public health and safety.

The Board of Osteopathic Licensure will make a representative available for the work session. We ask that you vote "ought to pass" on LD 805.