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**Testimony of Dillon Murray,
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Neither For Nor Against
LD 703, An Act to Establish a Health Care Gap Year Program for Recent
College Graduates
To the Joint Standing Committee on Labor
Hearing, March 12, 2025**

Good morning Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor. My name Dillon Murray, Legislative Liaison for the Maine Department of Labor (Department). I am here today to speak on behalf of the Department Neither for Nor Against LD 703, An Act to Establish a Health Care Gap Year Program for Recent College Graduates.

While the Department of Labor offers no position on this bill, we would like to speak to the bill language and provide more information regarding the health care gap year program outlined in the bill.

This bill provides a onetime \$500,000 appropriation for a health care gap year program that incentivizes recent college graduates to work in critical health care positions, particularly in underserved and rural communities." It is our understanding that this bill represents a request to continue a workforce development pilot program, launched by the Roux Institute at Northeastern University. This initiative was originally funded via ARPA funds, thus constituting the need for continued funding.

The Roux Institute partnership focuses on addressing both the short-term and long-term needs of Maine's health care sector. The initiative has been developing a pilot program to connect pre-clinical, post-baccalaureate students with front-end healthcare opportunities in Maine and convening healthcare providers in the state to identify critical job openings. Essentially, these workforce development efforts focus on equipping aspiring healthcare professionals with the skills and experience needed to excel in clinical roles.

Participants gain access to professional development programming, community-building activities, and educational opportunities at the Roux Institute and partner academic institutions. This holistic approach enhances participants' readiness for healthcare careers and strengthens retention within the industry.

Some preliminary data from the most recent quarterly numbers received:

- 8 employers engaged in industry Partnerships
- 52 individuals were trained due to these industry partnerships
- 13 employees received a new credential or certification
- 54 new individuals hired

Additionally, while the Department views these preliminary data as a success overall, we are unable to support the General Fund appropriation in the bill, as it is not included in the Governor's budget.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now or at a future work session.

The Maine Department of Labor is committed to serving Maine workers and businesses by helping employers recruit and train a talented workforce, providing workers with skills needed to compete in our economy, assisting individuals when jobs are lost, aiding people with disabilities reach career goals, ensuring safe and fair workplaces for people on the job and providing research and analysis of employment data to support job growth.