

**Letter in Support of LD 581**  
**“An Act to Fund the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship Program”**  
**Submitted by Amy Eckland**

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

As a student of the Maine Track Program, I am writing to support LD 581, “An Act to Fund the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship Program.” I grew up in Kennebunk, Maine where I attended the local public schools. I didn’t realize I wanted to be a doctor until I was an undergraduate, but even before then, I had heard about the Maine Track and related scholarships. Medical school felt so much more achievable knowing those opportunities existed for students like me. I ultimately decided to pursue a career in medicine due to my interest in both science and the humanities, and my desire to work in a field where I could collaborate with others to solve problems with a direct impact on individuals and communities.

As I considered careers in medicine, I knew becoming a physician was the best path for my goals, but the cost presented a significant barrier. I would need to take out loans to cover the cost of medical school as well as living expenses for four years on top of my existing undergraduate loans. Furthermore, as a Maine resident, I did not have any programs available to me with in-state tuition rates. I estimated that I was likely to graduate with up to \$400 thousand in debt without assistance. This intimidating figure nearly convinced me to pursue a different career, but I ultimately decided medical school was the right path for me despite the cost.

I loved my Maine Track interview. I knew I would fit in at this program and get an excellent education in line with my values. I was also excited at the possibility of learning medicine in the community that raised me and where I was already a member of the health care workforce in my gap year. However, my decision would ultimately have to come down to cost. When I received my financial aid offers that spring, I needed to choose the program that would leave me with the least debt. It was only because of the Doctors for Maine’s Future scholarship that this program was the Tufts Maine Track.

Without my scholarship, I would have selected an out-of-state program to pursue my medical and public health education. I am so grateful for the funding that allowed me to enroll at the school that was the best fit for me and my goals. The mentors and peers I have met here have defined my training so far and will continue to influence me going forward. While I will be attending a residency program elsewhere, I look forward to ultimately returning to Maine later in my career. My time as a trainee at Maine Medical Center is a major factor in my desire to do so. If we lose funding for some of these scholarships, I believe we will also lose future students like myself with the potential to become physicians for Maine communities.

Thank you,

Amy Eckland

TUSM-MMC MD/MPH Candidate, 2025