

**Testimony of Dr. Marya Goettsche Spurling  
In Strong Support of LD 581**

**“An Act to Fund the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship Program”**

**March 31, 2025**

Senator Raftery, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Marya Spurling, and as a graduate of the Maine Track Program I am here to support LD 581, An Act to Fund the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program.

I graduated from the first class of the Tufts Maine Track in 2013, and as a second-year medical student I testified before a state legislative committee in support of the Doctors for Maine’s Future program. I have included today a copy of my testimony from 2011 for your review. Since that testimony, I completed my third year rural Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship in Farmington and went on to attend my fourth year rotations all over Maine from Fort Kent to Lincoln, Norway, Lewiston and Portland. I matched to a rural Family Medicine residency, graduated in 2016 and returned to Maine to practice rural primary care and obstetrics in Skowhegan. I have also served as faculty for Tufts Maine Track students completing their third year rural Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship in Skowhegan. I still practice in Somerset County and I now teach at a local Family Medicine Residency program. It is very fulfilling to help train the next generation of family doctors in my current role.

Because of the Doctors for Maine’s Future scholarship that I received, my student loans at the time of graduation were about half of my average classmate’s. They were in the realm of \$160,000, which included \$12,000 from my undergraduate loans. I received a scholarship of \$25,000 annually from Doctors for Maine’s Future, along with some other grants and mostly federal loans (I believe the scholarship still provides each student with \$25,000 annually, but I am quite certain that the cost of tuition has risen significantly in the 12 years since I graduated). Making payments on the student loans during my three-year residency was not very realistic, and my income-based repayment amount was \$0. I returned to Maine because this is my home and my family is here. I had actually met my husband during my third year of medical school in Farmington, so we returned to Franklin County to live and raise a family. I was very fortunate to qualify for a rural primary care loan repayment program through the state and federal governments, and this helped me pay off the rest of my student debt within three years. Once I was done with the payments the same loan repayment program was able to help one of my junior colleagues, as there were, and likely still are, limited spots available. That is the practical financial impact that Doctors for Maine’s Future had for me personally.

As for the Maine Track and our growing number of graduates, my class celebrated our ten-year reunion a couple years ago with camping in Camden Hills State Park, and most of us present came from within the state of Maine. My classmates are found up and down the coast, inland to

central Maine and as far north as Bangor. Subsequent graduates have expanded the Maine Track's reach from York to Aroostook Counties. We are gradually infiltrating the state! It is likely that you may have been a patient of a physician who came through this program.

I feel compelled to also share how the Maine Track has affected me personally as a patient. Just over two years ago I was diagnosed with an early stage of breast cancer and needed surgery along with other treatments. Both my breast surgeon and my oncologist are graduates of the Maine Track, and I have known them since we were students together. I feel like one of the luckiest patients for many reasons, one of which is the level of trust I am able to have with my doctors during what can be a very stressful time. I can't point to a better measure of success of this program than the fact that I don't have to go very far from home to find outstanding care by physicians who are here because of the Maine Track.

I'm sure you are aware that there are many challenges facing health care at this time, and they are worsening. If you have had to find a new primary care doctor recently you have likely found that to be very difficult or even impossible. If you have needed to see a specialist, particularly if you are in a rural area such as where I practice, you have likely needed to wait months to over a year. This problem requires multiple approaches to solutions, and one of them is to ensure an accessible, affordable medical education to students who are from the places where the shortage is the greatest. I am very concerned that cutting the funding for Doctors for Maine's Future will exacerbate this shortage, and I hope you will unanimously support this bill.

**Testimony of Marya Spurling**  
**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs**  
**On the Doctors for Maine's Future Program**  
**In LD 100, the Supplemental Budget**  
**January 24, 2011**

Senator Rosen, Representative Flood and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Marya Spurling and I am here to speak to the proposed reduction to the Doctors for Maine's Future program.

I am from Little Cranberry Island in Hancock County and I graduated from the Islesford School and from Mount Desert Island High School. I'm one of three daughters of a lobsterman and an architect, and my family has lived on the Cranberry Isles for nine generations. My goal of becoming a doctor began as a child when I would travel with the Hancock County Medical Mission to Ecuador, where my father and I would serve as translators for medical teams serving in rural communities. I knew I wanted to help the medically underserved, and little did I know that they included my own neighbors back home, and even my own family. My goal is to practice family medicine in rural Maine, possibly near to where I grew up, and to incorporate international medical work into what I do.

Since beginning my studies in the Tufts Maine Track a year and a half ago, I have been continually amazed and humbled by the effort and dedication shown by those who have worked so hard to not only make this program a reality, but to make it work so well. I never doubt the quality of education I am receiving through this program and I feel very privileged to be a part of it.

The Maine Track program and I are a perfect fit, and I would venture to say it is the reason I am in medical school right now. Its emphasis is on rural medicine, specifically in Maine, and it provides students from Maine an opportunity to attend medical school that we wouldn't necessarily have had otherwise. It is unique in that all of our clinical training during school is completed in Maine- not just at Maine Medical Center, but all over the state. I am looking forward to spending my entire third year at Franklin Memorial Hospital in Farmington, and my classmates and I have already enjoyed hands-on clinical experience in places like Rumford, Damariscotta, Rangeley, Van Buren, Fort Kent, Bangor, Harrington, and Gouldsboro.

If you go to any of the sites throughout Maine where my classmates and I are receiving training in primary care, you will find doctors and patients with beaming enthusiasm for this program and what it means for health care in our state. The truth is, we are already lacking primary care doctors in Maine, as well as providers

in almost any specialty. Future projections paint an even worse picture, and this is only one of the barriers to health care access here. The way to get more doctors to practice in our state is to get more students from our state to go to medical school who will then come home to practice. This program is an opportunity to do that, and one that deserves our support.

The Maine Track Program, supported by Doctors for Maine's Future, is young, but it has great potential to make a big impact on the future of health care here in Maine. The benefits we will reap may not be seen immediately, but I urge you to look beyond the next few years and consider this program to be a very important investment in Maine's future. It will be much easier for us to come home to practice in rural areas where we are really needed if our student debt burden is more manageable. Maine is one of a few states that doesn't have an in-state medical school, and that is where this budget proposal comes in. I understand and appreciate the importance of being careful with our budget, but I believe that crushing this program in its infancy will cripple our state for years to come.

I am very proud to speak of the amazing support I have received from my family, my community, and my state government. I hope that Maine's students in the future will be able to speak of the same.