

Senator Raferty, 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."

My name is Hanna Gutow and I am a third year medical student in the Tufts Maine Track Program. I was born and raised in Castine, Maine and attended high school at George Stevens Academy in Blue Hill, Maine. My family still resides in Castine and have been deeply involved in the community with my father acting as Assistant Fire Chief for the volunteer Fire Department and EMS service and my mother serving as one of our three town Selectboard members. This deep care for community and involvement in our small town were driving factors in my desire to pursue a career in medicine and give back to the rural community that helped to raise me.

Through the Tufts Maine Track program, I have had not only the opportunity to pursue my goal of becoming a physician, but I have been able to do so in my home state of Maine. This opportunity to both learn from and help provide care for our rural and underserved populations has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my life and has deeply informed my future career goals. I spent the last year training and living in Farmington, ME at MaineHealth Franklin Memorial Hospital learning from the inspirational physicians who have dedicated their careers to serving rural communities. As I consider my future, I intend to follow in their footsteps and work as a rural primary care physician likely here in Maine.

All of this has been made possible for me due to my Maine Track Scholarship which the Governor's proposed Biennial Budget would put in jeopardy for my final year of medical school as well as future classes of students. I have received \$25,000 in scholarship funds for each of the last three years of medical school significantly reducing my student debt burden and making it possible for me to pursue a career as a rural primary care physician. Without this financial support, it is very likely that I would not have been able to attend medical school in Maine and would have considered non-primary care careers due to the need to pay off a larger amount of student loans.

Since its inception, the Tufts Maine Track program has graduated 429 physicians across 11 classes, 278 of whom were from Maine. Additionally, 74% of Maine Track students who completed their residency in Maine are practicing in Maine. This is exceptionally high in comparison to data from the Association of American Medical Colleges', which found that 58.6% of the individuals who completed residency training from 2014 to 2023 are practicing in the state where they did their residency training. In order to continue this strong pipeline of Maine physicians, I urge you to please vote in favor of LD 581 and continue the Doctors for Maine Futures scholarship funding so that we as medical students and physicians can continue to serve our great state of Maine.