

**Testimony of Samantha Barry
Medical School Student
In Strong Support of LD 581
“An Act to Fund the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship Program”**

March 31, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Samantha Barry and I am here to express my strong support for LD 581.

I grew up in Windham, ME and attended Colby College in Waterville. I am now in my fourth year of medical school at the TUSM-Maine Track program and I am a recipient of the Maine Track Scholarship, which the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship helps to fund. My dream is to become an Emergency Medicine physician and to practice in rural Maine as well as helping educate future medical students.

I received very fragmented medical care as a child. Our local primary care office had so much physician turnover that my PCP changed every 6 months. As a consequence, I never had a meaningful longitudinal relationship with my medical provider. There were many direct and indirect negative consequences to this.

When I was eight years old, I developed a skin infection on my arm. After several attempts to treat it with topical ointments, I had to have it incised and drained, a procedure that I now understand was performed incorrectly and was very upsetting at my age. I spent the next 10 years terrified of every doctor’s visit, unable to separate the providers from the pain I had experienced. On top of that, the infections kept recurring – I had 5 more of them between childhood and college. Each time, various ointments would fail to treat them and I would need to have procedures to remove them again and again, each time leaving scars, including on my face and neck. Every time this happened, I saw a different physician who never seemed concerned about the number of times this had happened to me. The sixth time occurred in college, and I went to see my campus doctor. Within seconds of looking at the infection and hearing a very brief history of my recurring problem, he had a diagnosis for me: methicillin resistant staph aureus, an increasingly common infection of normal skin bacteria that is resistant to typical antibiotics. He gave me a stronger oral antibiotic, and 3 weeks of topical antibiotic ointment to put up my nose to eliminate the resistant bacteria, no scalpels required. I haven’t had another infection since.

Now that I have 3 years of medical training under my belt, I understand that my condition is actually very easy to diagnose and treat. Perhaps if I had had a consistent provider in my

childhood, who saw me more than once, my infections could have been identified earlier and I could have been spared the distress and discomfort of repeated procedures.

You may be surprised that I ended up going into medicine after the negative experiences I'd had with medical care – I certainly was! However, my love of science and passion for caring for others led me here anyway. As I started to pursue medical education, I learned more about Maine's shortage of physicians, and I started to realize how this very shortage had affected my own care. I realized I wanted to become part of the solution to this problem, and attending the Maine Track program, which shares the exact same goal, was a perfect fit. This program has been incredibly effective at increasing the number of physicians working in our state, especially in our rural regions and in our sorely understaffed primary care offices.

Myself and many of my colleagues do not come from financial backgrounds that allow us to pay full tuition to become a doctor. In the absence of an in-state option for medical education, the Maine Track Scholarship is the very best deal we can get. I would not be standing here as part of this program today if it wasn't for this scholarship. Despite the incredible generosity of the State's Doctors for Maine's Future program and private donors, I will still be about \$350K in debt when I graduate and start residency. This funding source is absolutely crucial to training doctors that not only truly want to work here in Maine, but doctors who grew up here and understand the community and the values of this great state. You are hearing today from the next generation of physicians in Maine and we have so many ideas about how to improve healthcare access and quality for your constituents. Speaking from experience as both a patient and a provider in training I can assure you that we need more doctors, not fewer. Thank you for listening.