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INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

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**Testimony from the University of New England Before the Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs**

**LD 651: An Act to Fund the Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program**

**Public Hearing: March 31, 2025**

**Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,**

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 651, which provides ongoing funds to support the Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program. The University of New England is Maine’s leading institution in educating students in healthcare fields. UNE can attest to the critical importance of this program as one of the tools our state has to address our healthcare workforce needs.

The Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program has been instrumental in attracting and retaining top talent in healthcare fields, particularly in underserved areas. By providing financial incentives to healthcare professionals who commit to practicing in Maine, this program has helped to alleviate the burden of student loan debt and encouraged graduates to stay in the state.

As an institution, we have seen firsthand the impact of this program on our students and alumni. Many of our graduates have benefited from this program, allowing them to pursue their passion for healthcare without the weight of significant debt. This, in turn, has enabled them to provide high-quality care to patients across the state, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Unfortunately, Maine faces significant healthcare workforce shortages. UNE is dedicated to educating students to fill the gaps. From 2015 to 2024, UNE graduated over 8,000 students in the health professions:

- Athletic Trainers
- Dental Hygienists
- Dentists
- Registered Nurses
- Nurse Anesthetists
- Pharmacists
- Physical Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW)
- Physician’s Assistants

A quarter of those graduates are now licensed to practice and work in Maine. Although that is substantial, it could be more with the right incentives in place. Student debt is a top concern for these graduates. The ability to alleviate that debt is a priority and can be a deciding factor for these healthcare professionals when making career decisions.



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LD 651 ensures the continuation of this vital program, providing \$1 million in funding for the next two fiscal years. This investment will yield significant returns, as it will enable more healthcare professionals to stay in Maine, contribute to the local economy, and provide essential care to our communities. Without additional investment, this program will run out of funding and Maine will be foregoing a significant opportunity to attract and retain healthcare professionals. We urge you to pass LD 651 to keep this vital program funded.

Thank you,

Ed Cervone  
Director of Strategic Partnerships and External Relations  
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