



**Maine Medical
Association**



**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AND
THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION**

Neither For Nor Against

LD 1166 An Act to Change the Professional Title and Identification of Physician Assistants to Physician Associates

Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services
Room 220, Cross Building, Augusta, Maine
Thursday, April 3, 2025

Good Afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services. My name is Joel Kase, DO, and I am a Past President of the Maine Osteopathic Association. I am also a past member of the Board of Directors of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) and a current member of the Board of Trustees of the American Osteopathic Association.

I am submitting this testimony neither for nor against LD 1166, An Act to Change the Professional Title and Identification of Physician Assistants to Physician Associates, and the proposed amendment, on behalf of the Maine Medical Association and Maine Osteopathic Association.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) is a professional organization representing over 4,000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.

Our organizations are testifying in the "NFNA" category, not because our membership is neutral on the question whether it is appropriate and in the public interest to change the name of health care practitioners currently licensed as "Physician Assistants" to "Physician Associates," rather, we testify in this category because our members have expressed a diversity of opinion about this question.

Some of our members believe very strongly that the name change suggested in this bill is not appropriate because of the potential to confuse patients about the names or titles of health care workers and to mislead patients about the professional credentials of the

health care practitioners who are treating them. These members feel an obligation to take a position in defense of the education and training required for an individual to qualify for licensing as an M.D. or D.O. and credentialing to lead treatment of patients at health care organizations across this country.

Those members also point out that “Associate Physicians” is a term used in other parts of the country to describe students who have graduated medical school but have not yet completed a residency program.¹ Given the limited slots, those individuals might not have matched at a residency but still have important skills to offer to help with the healthcare shortage crisis. This could be a future opportunity for Maine, and if LD 1166 were enacted, there would be patient confusion about the clinician's training.

Other physicians within our membership are more willing to accept PA colleagues' representations, like with the proposed amendment, that this proposed name change does not accompany a scope of practice expansion.

In our joint MMA/MOA Legislative Committee process, we strive for consensus on bills but could not achieve consensus on L.D. 1166. We encourage members to express their perspectives in the legislative process regardless of the two professional organizations' positions. And you undoubtedly have heard some individual perspectives on this topic expressed today.

Our professional associations, MMA/MOA and Maine Association of Physician Associates (“MEAPA”), have a strong history of mutual respect when we disagree on public policy issues and collaboration when we agree. Regardless of the issue, we have sought compromise whenever possible. MMA and MOA members appreciate MEAPA members' interest in promoting the professionalism of PAs in our health care system, and our members work daily on the front lines of patient care.

Yet, MMA and MOA have an obligation to articulate the important leadership role of physicians in our health care system and patients' interest in physicians leading their treatment teams.

Thank you for considering the MMA/MOA views on L.D. 1166. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Thank you,

Joel A. Kase, D.O., MPH

Past President of the Maine Osteopathic Association

¹ <https://alec.org/model-policy/associate-physician-act/>