

Testimony of Amy Sjoberg, MS4, Tufts University School of Medicine – Maine Track in Strong Support of LD 1311, “An Act to Expand Maine’s Health Care Workforce by Improving Educational Opportunities,” As Amended Friday April 4, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Amy Sjoberg, a 4th year medical student in the Tufts University School of Medicine Maine Track, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1311, “An Act to Expand Maine’s Health Care Workforce by Improving Educational Opportunities.”

After growing up in a rural community, I have always wanted to practice in a similar setting. When I began medical school, I looked for opportunities to engage in rural healthcare and joined the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) medical scholars program. This program emphasizes interprofessional collaboration to help study and address health disparities and public health issues in rural communities across Maine.

I also engaged in the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) curriculum in my third year at Tufts by spending 9 months training at a critical access hospital in Damariscotta. Those 9 months were the most formative of my clinical education. Not only did I find my calling as a general surgeon, but it solidified my passion for becoming a rural physician. Without my LIC experience I would not have applied into general surgery, and I certainly would not have found the mentorship and community that inspired me to pursue a career in rural healthcare.

This bill addresses the use of funds to support third-year rotations at rural healthcare sites, increasing the number of students who can gain experience at rural hospitals. Research shows that students and residents trained in rural areas are far more likely to return to rural practice after graduation compared to those without such exposure. By expanding access to rural rotations in Maine, we can enhance physician recruitment and retention in rural communities throughout the state.

I am just one example of how this curriculum can make a difference. Over the past couple of years, it has been a privilege to learn from Mainers, and while I’ve recently matched into a surgical residency at ChristianaCare in Delaware, I hope to return to rural Maine after completing my training. Supporting LD 1311 will ensure that students like me have the opportunity to experience rural rotations in Maine and eventually practice in the communities that inspired their journey.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.