

**Testimony from the University of New England to the Committee on Health and Human Services**

**LD 1311: An Act to Expand Maine's Health Care Workforce by Improving Educational Opportunities**

April 4, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Ed Cervone. I am the Director of External Relations for the University of New England (UNE) and I am here to testify in support of LD 1311.

UNE is home to Maine's Portland-based medical school, serving students from Maine and from away. Our program requires two years of classroom learning (predominantly) followed by two years of clinical rotations in the field. Those who successfully complete their degree programs then move on to a residency program, and eventually become licensed physicians who practice within a community.

UNE medical students' third year clinical experience is a critical piece of their program. Students spend their entire third year within the same community hospital, becoming integrated into that community. This past year, UNE had 178 third-year students who needed clinical training. Of those students, only 70 could secure a clinical rotation in Maine due to limited space; the other 108 had to leave the state to find their clinical rotation site.

We view this as a concern and as an opportunity. UNE data show that nearly 60% of UNE medical students return to work in the community where they had their third-year clinical rotations or where they completed their residency. These students build strong bonds to these communities. By providing more clinical rotations (particularly for that 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the program) and residency slots, we can attract and retain more physicians. Providing just 40 more clinical and residency slots would be expected to lead to 24 more physicians practicing in Maine.

This is an effective workforce development strategy and investment for rural communities where physician shortages are a reality. UNE students seek out these rural service opportunities and are eager to work in underserved communities. If there were more clinical training opportunities, UNE would have no problem filling them with students, increasing the likelihood that these doctors would end up taking a job in that community.

Thank you for considering this bill. A targeted investment in this proven workforce development strategy would go a long way toward addressing the health care needs of Maine's rural communities and pay dividends for years to come.

Sincerely,

Ed Cervone  
Director of External Relations