



University of Maine System Testimony in Opposition to LD 1225, An Act to Amend the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program — Presented by UMS Chief External & Governmental Affairs Officer Samantha Warren — April 14, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs: My name is Sam Warren and I am the Chief External & Governmental Affairs Officer for the University of Maine System (UMS), which produced 930 healthcare graduates last year and brought tens of millions of dollars in related research investment to the state.

In 2021, alongside other educational institutions and healthcare providers, our System successfully advocated for the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program previously established by the Legislature to finally be funded. At the time, Maine was short 2,250 registered nurses and projected to be behind by 3,200 nurses by 2025, yet our public university nursing education programs were turning away hundreds of qualified applicants each year due to a lack of faculty and facility capacity. With faculty salaries tens of thousands of dollars lower than those of practicing nurses, this loan repayment program uniquely addresses this challenge by supporting registered nurses who commit to serving as much-needed nurse educators in Maine. It was intentionally designed to provide higher levels of repayment based on the level of degree attainment, with the greatest benefit to those who earned doctoral degrees, which is a requirement to teach graduate students.

Since then, **the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program has proven invaluable to our state's ability to recruit and retain nursing faculty, including at our public universities. Maine's nursing workforce is finally growing.** According to a November 2024 report from Maine's Nursing Action Coalition, the number of licensed nurses in the state increased from 25,235 in December 2021 to 27,433 in August 2024, primarily because of the greater output of nurses by educational institutions led by UMS. However, the report notes that despite this promising workforce growth, because of the rapid rise in the number of Mainers age 65 and older, who require two or three times more healthcare resources, the shortage will actually increase to more than 2,800 nurses by 2030.

Given this growing need, Maine cannot afford to reverse its successful efforts to enable nurses to attain the master's or doctoral degrees that are foundational to preparing the future nursing workforce. **The expansion in loan repayment eligibility proposed by LD 1225 would undermine the very intent of the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, straining already inadequate State funding and exacerbating our educational institutions' ongoing struggle to recruit and retain nurses with master's and doctoral degrees to serve as faculty.**

Less than 10% of RNs in Maine hold at least a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), the minimum degree required by national accreditation and the Maine State Board of Nursing to teach in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree program — even as a part-time instructor. Additionally, according to [the American Association of Colleges of Nursing](#), 79.8% of nursing faculty vacancies were for positions in which a doctoral degree was required or preferred. Decades of research confirm that nurses with higher levels of education significantly improve patient outcomes, including lower mortality rates, fewer patient complications, fewer hospital readmissions, and shorter hospital stays.

As it is currently structured, the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program is the state's most effective tool to increase nurses' educational attainment and build this critical pipeline of nursing faculty necessary to grow the size and skill of the state's nursing workforce. For this reason, we urge you to reject LD 1225.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Maine's public universities and our efforts to improve healthcare access and outcomes by elevating nursing education. I welcome your questions.