



## LD 507 – An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund LifeFlight of Maine

### Testimony in Support

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Financial Affairs:

My name is Joe Kellner. I live in Windham and serve as the Chief Executive Officer of LifeFlight of Maine. For over twenty years, I have been deeply involved in emergency medical services here in Maine and am constantly reminded about how proud we should be about the innovation and infrastructure that allows us to minimize the adverse effects of geography on healthcare outcomes.

Today, we are before you to request your support for LD 507, which would allocate bond funding to critical infrastructure projects that allow for the continuation of a critical promise – if you call us, we will be able to come for you.

LifeFlight of Maine is the states' only air medical service. Together, with our mutual aid partners in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, we provide critical care transport services that lead the country and the world in safety, quality, and reliability. The investments in this infrastructure over the years by the people of Maine have allowed us to give a second chance to a patient with a life-threatening bleeding disorder, a patient who had just suffered a cardiac arrest in a rural community, a patient with a hemorrhagic stroke, a very sick respiratory patient, another patient in a different community having a heart attack, one that was at risk of having their airway completely close that needed urgent surgical intervention, and another patient having a stroke. None of these patients wake up in the morning planning to need LifeFlight's services, and they found themselves in various corners of Maine, in great rural hospitals, but needing the critical interventions that can only be offered at the larger tertiary care centers. The list of patients I provided you moments ago represent the 24-hours preceding this hearing. This is not at all atypical.

LifeFlight is projected to serve 4,000 patients per year by 2030. The demand for LifeFlight has increased 88% over the last ten years, and we need to continue to invest in the future. The infrastructure we invest in today will give these patients their best chance at having a "tomorrow."

This bond package will fund five critical infrastructure priorities: repairing aging helipads, replacing outdated weather reporting stations, securing our statewide air medical communications system, enhancing helicopter fueling capabilities, and adding a second airplane to our fleet. The additional airplane is particularly crucial for patients facing the longest distances or requiring transport during poor weather conditions. Each of these targeted investments directly increase our ability to deliver timely, life-saving care to Mainers when they need it most.

Funding for the provision of critical care transport services comes from a variety of sources. Over the years, generous donors have contributed \$44M to support the large expenses associated with a service like ours. We have also been the fortunate recipients of grant funds to develop various programs. While we rely on insurance revenue, that doesn't come close to meeting the need of allowing us to promise the service to anyone regardless of their ability to pay.

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The future of LifeFlight is bright. We have a team that makes me proud every single day. LifeFlight is not just about moving patients with the speed of aircraft. We focus heavily on improving outcomes through the provision of care the moment we meet our patients. The aircraft and infrastructure that surround us are merely tools that enable our teams to perform.

Representing another critical piece of the funding puzzle, this investment makes good sense both practically and economically. Having good healthcare access gives families more comfort living in rural communities. Knowing that the front doors of the trauma center can be moved to our rural communities may offer business leaders additional comfort in having their roots in areas that desperately need economic development.

Access to LifeFlight isn't just about those that live in our rural communities, either. Over the years, patients with homes in every town in our state have relied on LifeFlight and the stories of impact seem endless. While we wish no one would ever need us, we want to be there when they do.

On behalf of our caregivers, pilots, healthcare community, and the patients we may or may not have yet met, thank you to the sponsors and co-sponsors, patients and families, healthcare providers, advocates, and to this committee for your support of this wise and timely investment in Maine.

