



Anne Graham

P.O. Box 66

Yarmouth, Maine 04096

Phone: (207) 287-1430

Anne.Graham@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

April 15, 2025

Testimony of Representative Anne Graham in support of
**LD 961, An Act to Address Maine's Health Care Workforce
Shortage and Improve Access to Care**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and my distinguished colleagues on the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, I am here today to testify in strong support of **LD 961, An Act to Address Maine's Health Care Workforce Shortage and Improve Access to Care**. I am a proud cosponsor of this bill and I want to thank Representative Mathieson for bringing this important measure forward.

As many of you know, I worked for more than 35 years as a nurse practitioner in Maine. I received my undergraduate nursing degree from Boston College in 1981, and my advanced nursing degree from Yale University in 1986. The education I received from both institutions was challenging, rigorous, hands-on and, most importantly, it prepared me to see patients immediately upon graduation. My first job was at a primary pediatric practice at Boston Children's Hospital where I worked with pediatricians and nurse practitioners without a supervision mandate.

This is what brings me in front of the committee today. As you've now heard from LD 961's primary sponsor, nurse practitioners in Maine are subject to a 24-month transition to practice period, where they must be supervised by a physician or an experienced nurse practitioner prior to being able to practice independently.

This is an overburdensome and unnecessary barrier for nurse practitioners who want to live and work in our wonderful state, and here's why:

- There is absolutely zero evidence to suggest that a transition to practice period makes patients safer or nurse practitioners more prepared to see patients. In fact, when the State of Maine lifted the transition to practice requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no change to patient outcomes or safety. Rather, nurse practitioners played a critical role in keeping the people of Maine healthy and preventing the further spread of the virus.

- No other advanced practice nurses (APRN) in the State of Maine have this requirement; this includes nurse anesthetists, certified nurse midwives, and clinical nurse specialists. In fact, this nurse practitioner-specific requirement was developed as a political compromise many years ago, before most of us were serving in the Legislature. It's time for us to revisit this requirement in light of the evidence that it does not impact patient outcomes or safety.
- Most states and territories do not have a similar state-mandated transition to practice requirement, since they recognize that such a requirement does not change patient outcomes or further prepare nurse practitioners for practice. Instead, it disincentivizes nurse practitioners from seeking employment in those states.

In addition, I want to point out that this legislation will do more than just lift the transition to practice requirement for nurse practitioners—it will also help to solve one of Maine's most pressing issues: a massive healthcare workforce shortage.

Here's an example: according to a recent report issued by the Maine Center for Economic Policy, there are nearly 3,000 clients waiting for psychiatric care in the State of Maine. These patients wait an average of 33 weeks to get an appointment with a mental health professional. By lifting the transition to practice requirement, the State of Maine could more easily attract psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners who would be well equipped to serve this population who are in dire need of care.

According to this same report, the State of Maine needs, "More than 2,300 additional fulltime healthcare workers to bridge the gap between the care people are entitled to and approved for and what is available." This is a staggering statistic.

However, by passing LD 961, we can play an important role in filling this gap, without compromising patient safety or outcomes. This would be a win for the State of Maine, a win for nurse practitioners, and a win for the thousands of patients who have trouble accessing the care that they need and deserve.

When I moved back to Maine over 30 years ago, the pediatrician I worked with had to sign all my notes and I was licensed under her license. I want to thank the nurse practitioners "mothers" who fought for expanded practice for nurse practitioners. I believe this supervision requirement was a vestige of the old regulations. As a member of the Health and Human Services Committee, the point is driven home often that we have an enormous workforce shortage. This bill will help make a difference particularly for our rural friends and neighbors to access quality healthcare.

I am honored to be a nurse practitioner and to serve in this legislative body. I hope that you will all join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.