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April 15, 2025

AARP Maine in support of LD 961: An Act to Address Maine's Health Care Workforce Shortage and Improve Access to Care

Greetings Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. My name is Bridget Quinn, and I am an Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today. Today I am testifying in support of LD 961.

LD 961 will eliminate some of Maine's barriers that prevent advance practice registered nurses (APRNs) to practice to the full extent of their education and training. AARP Maine supports the bill because the proposal will:

- **Improve Access to Care and Hold Down Health Care Costs** – APRNs can meet the growing demand for primary and preventative care.
- **Support Unpaid Family Caregivers** – When care is delayed it not only hurts consumers, it also places added stress on family caregivers, of which we have 166,000 in Maine.
- **Expands Consumer Choice** – Nurse practitioners are educated and trained to provide high-quality primary care and preventative health care.

There is precedent for this to be a permanent policy in Maine. On March 20, 2020, Governor Mills, in her executive order on Medical Licensing and Telehealth, suspended "Mandatory supervision or collaborative practice requirements for otherwise qualified physician assistants and advanced practice registered nurses who are assisting or will assist in the health care response to COVID-19." These APRNs stepped up and were there for Mainers, providing the critical care we needed.

Eliminating the provisions outlined in LD 961 is also critical for those who live in rural communities. A 2024 survey conducted by AARP of Mainers 45+ found that 77% of respondents felt that distance to healthcare services would be a factor impacting their

ability to remain in their homes as they age. LD 961 is critical to expand access to care in our rural communities across the state.

To quote AARP's former CEO Jo Ann Jenkins on this issue, "Few professionals enjoy the trust and respect that nurses do. They've earned every bit of it and deserve even more. Why is it, then, that so many of the most educated, thoroughly trained and well-credentialed nurses aren't allowed to use all their skills and talents to take care of patients who want and need their help?"

This committee is no stranger to the concerns of Maine's health care workforce shortage. You've seen bills, and I am sure some of you have experienced this firsthand when looking to address your own care needs, as I have. Lack of providers is hindering access to care across Maine. This concern about access to care requires us to look at opportunities to allow APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education and training, as outlined in LD 961. For these reasons we urge this committee to support LD 961.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Should you have any questions I can be reached at bquinn@aarp.org or at 207-272-8563.

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AARP Maine

