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**LD 1497 An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Primary Care Reporting by the Maine
Quality Forum and to Establish the Primary Care Advisory Council
Testimony in Support**

April 22, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am speaking today on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with more than 10,000 employees statewide.

Northern Light Health
Acadia Hospital
A.R. Gould Hospital
Blue Hill Hospital
C.A. Dean Hospital
Eastern Maine Medical Center
Home Care & Hospice
Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mayo Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Northern Light Pharmacy
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

For many years the Maine Health Data Organization has reported on primary care spending in Maine. This year MHDO published the sixth annual report and noted that on average, for the three categories of payors combined (Commercial, MaineCare and Medicare), primary care spending as a percent of total spending in Maine has remained relatively constant at just under 10%. We understand the overall revenue side of the equation, this bill presents an opportunity to address the critically important demand for primary care services and the essential primary care workforce infrastructure needed to care for the people of Maine.

In November of 2024 HRSA published a report titled "State of the Primary Care Workforce 2024". The report documents that from 2016 to 2021 the number of primary care physicians increased by only 3.6% nationally in contrast to an 8.7% increase in physician specialists. The report also projects a national shortage of 87,150 full-time equivalent (FTE) primary care physicians by the year 2037. A report published by the Robert Graham Center estimated that Maine's demand for primary care physicians will increase by 9% in 2030 due to aging out of the physicians practicing and adjustments for population growth. We see this trend in Northern Light Health primary care recruitment data.

This bill provides a comprehensive framework to address the need for primary care providers in Maine by establishing the Primary Care Advisory Council. The council will perform research and assessment tasks to identify specific actions required to create a sustainable high-functioning primary care system in the State. The council will be supported by the Maine Quality Forum that will provide annual reports to DHHS, this

committee and the Health and Human Services Committee. We do recommend that the Primary Care Advisory Council sunset in five years, once a council is established in law it must continue in perpetuity. We recommend stop date prompting a review of the council's accomplishments, should the council need to continue legislative review will advise the next generation of the council's work.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this important legislation.