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Thank you, Chairwoman Bailey and Chairwoman Mathieson, and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify in favor of LD1803, which would expand the scope of practice for optometrists in Maine.

My name is Peter Kemble. I'm currently a fourth and final year optometry student at the New England College of Optometry in Boston. I was born and raised in Bangor and attended the University of Maine for my undergraduate degree. Next year, I'll be one of the resident optometrists in the Maine VA system, learning at Togus and Portland for 6 months each. After residency, I'll be staying in Maine to practice.

As you have heard, and will hear, scope expansion will directly lead to current Maine optometrists being able to expand access to healthcare. I'd like to touch on the indirect benefits.

Indirectly, by expanding scope, Maine becomes a more attractive destination to practice optometry. At this time, every optometry student must learn outside the state, as there are no optometry schools in Maine. If there's ever time to settle down in one of the other 49 states, it's in the time immediately after graduation.

If you ask any of my classmates why they got into optometry, at some level, the answer is "to help people see." There's no better way to do so than by practicing to the full extent of our education, and to do that in Maine requires scope expansion. Passing LD1803 will make our home more enticing to both students from Maine and those from away to live and work in Maine where they can practice as they were trained.

As a third-year student, I took "Advanced Surgical and Laser Procedures," where we learned to manage lump and bump removal, steroid injections, suturing, intravenous and intramuscular injections, YAG lasers, SLT, and LPI. The course included lectures, quizzes, tests, and lab sessions for practicing with needles, microsurgical equipment, and lasers safely.

In my fourth year, I observed numerous procedures at Togus VA in Maine. During my clinical externship, I experienced a stroke with only ocular symptoms. The optometrists quickly recognized these symptoms and took me to the emergency room, leading to my full recovery. Maine optometrists possess considerable medical knowledge and should be trusted to perform the procedures in this scope expansion bill.

Mainers deserve the best that we as optometrists can offer to them, and to do that, we need to expand the scope of optometry. Please pass LD1803

Thank you for your time and consideration.