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Good afternoon, Honorable Donna Bailey, Kristi Mathieson, and  
HCIFS Committee members,

My name is Dr. Peter Farnum Morse and I live now in  
Scarborough. I am grateful to testify in support of LD 1803, An Act  
to Amend the Laws Governing Optometric Practice.

Now 74 and retired, my background is from a family with deep  
Maine roots embracing healthcare. I graduated from Suffield  
Academy in CT., Bowdoin College, Draper School of Public  
Health, UMass, Amherst and New England College of Optometry  
in 1979. This included residencies at Rutland Heights hospital and  
Brighton Marine in Boston.

I practiced optometry in Freeport and South Portland for 42 years,  
20 of which included building the Eye Clinic at the US Public  
Health facility on Veranda St. in Portland from two to over nine  
staff optometrists and adding two major ophthalmology groups as  
it morphed to Coastal Health and later Martin's Point Uniformed  
Services Health Center. It was a privilege to serve this community  
for over four decades.

Today, I speak not just as a retired optometrist, but as one who  
understands the challenges of passing on a private practice. The  
reality shared by many in our profession who have retired or are  
in process, is that it has become extremely difficult to find  
someone to take over a private practice.

Despite a strong patient base, financially sound practice, and a clear need for eye care, I was unable to find another optometrist to take over the reins, even when only asking equipment cost. Many young optometrists I spoke with, often burdened by student debt, chose not to practice in Maine because our state allows a more limited scope of care than others.

I ended up writing each of my active patients a letter regarding record disposition, closing the door, leaving my patients to seek care elsewhere.

LD 1803 would expand patient care services in a wider range of locations, something 14 other states have already done. This change would make Maine a more attractive place in which to live and work for new optometrists, especially underserved areas. Maine faces a significant shortage of qualified healthcare workers. We are qualified.

If we don't act, I'm afraid more retiring optometrists will be faced with the same situation.

Supporting LD 1803 is a vital step to improving access, care quality, and in keeping Maine independent practices alive.

Please vote in favor of this important bill. Thank you.