



Testimony of Kathleen D. Moneghan, President, Maine Academy of Physician Associates

In support of LD 2088 "An Act to Increase Access to Primary Care Provided by Physician Associates"

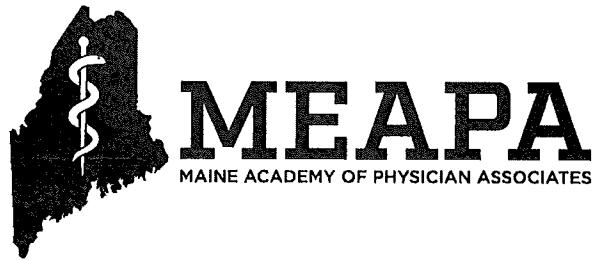
Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, my name is Kathleen Moneghan. I am the President of the Maine Academy of Physician Associates (MEAPA), a Dover-Foxcroft resident, and I practice medicine in Occupational Health and Urgent Care. MEAPA is a non-profit organization that represents over 1,000 PAs practicing in Maine and the patients we care for. Today, I am testifying on behalf of MEAPA in support of LD 2088 "An Act to Increase Access to Primary Care Provided by Physician Associates."

In 1977, MEAPA was incorporated as a nonprofit organization to represent PAs employed within the State of Maine. The PA profession originated in the 1960's, at a time when the US was experiencing a progressive shortage of physicians, particularly in primary care. The goal was to rapidly train and deploy safe and competent clinicians to help address physician shortages and increase access to quality healthcare. Today, there are more than 1,100 PAs practicing in Maine.

First and foremost, MEAPA wishes to thank this committee for continually recognizing the value PAs bring to Maine and the unique role we as clinicians play in helping to address access to quality and affordability during this time of crisis and turmoil in the healthcare system. We see ourselves as partners alongside physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals when it comes to ensuring all Mainers have access to the care they need, when they need it, where they need it.

The value PAs bring to the U.S. healthcare system is undeniable. PAs diagnose, treat, prescribe and have an essential role in providing high quality, evidence-based medical care. As valued and respected medical professionals, we remain united with our healthcare colleagues in a shared mission to provide safe and effective care to all patients and are rooted in our commitment to transforming healthcare in our country through patient-centered, team-based medical practice.

Collaboration happens naturally through referrals, consultations, and shared patient care – NOT through mandatory signatures. In fact, many PAs often practice independently and without oversight, frequently managing their own panel of patients as the sole provider responsible for their care, especially in rural areas of our state. You have heard from many of my colleagues today and many more who have submitted written testimony regarding the barriers they are currently facing in their practice along with their desire to use their skills and expertise to help fix healthcare gaps they are encountering on a daily basis. LD 2088 is about one word: **opportunity**.



- Opportunity for PAs to serve their patients at the top of the licensure, training, and scope of practice without outdated and often-expensive barrier the practice agreement requirement has proven to be for PAs working in non-physician-led clinical settings.
- Opportunity to expand services in rural areas of Maine at an unprecedented time when specialty practices, urgent care centers, and even entire hospitals are closing throughout our state.
- Opportunity to become a solution to this problem for our displaced patients from these closures.
- Opportunity to help build a more efficient healthcare system in the state we live in and love, where every healthcare professional can contribute to the fullest of their abilities.
- Opportunity to practice in the same way that our Nurse Practitioner colleagues have been able to for over 30 years in this state.

PA^s see these gaps and want to play an active role in being a part of the solution. It's part of our clinical history, education, and our identity as PA^s. Please allow us the opportunity to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Kathleen Moneghan, DHA, MPAS, PA-C
President, Maine Academy of Physician Associates