



Northern Light Health  
Government Relations  
43 Whiting Hill Rd.  
Brewer, ME 04412

Office 207.973.5578  
Main 207.973.7050

**LD 2131 An Act to Preserve and Improve Access to Nursing Facility Services  
in the State  
Testimony in Support  
February 11, 2026**

Northern Light Health  
Acadia Hospital  
AR Gould Hospital  
Blue Hill Hospital  
CA Dean Hospital  
Eastern Maine Medical Center  
Home Care & Hospice  
Maine Coast Hospital  
Mayo Hospital  
Mercy Hospital  
Sebastcook Valley Hospital  
Northern Light Health Foundation  
Northern Light Medical Transport  
& Emergency Care  
Northern Light Pharmacy  
Northern Light Work Health

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this bill.

Northern Light Health organizations include 9 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 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.

Our impression is that nursing homes in Maine have stabilized with the funding resources provided by the new payment methodology. The bill before you today includes important recommendations to sustain stability for facilities - supporting the work they are doing to hire and retain staff and maintain census. We support these recommendations.

While we are pleased to see the progress that has been made, hospitals continue to be challenged with long stay patients in acute care beds waiting for discharge to a nursing facility bed. In 2025 the average length of stay in a Northern Light Health hospital for a long stay nursing facility patient was 24.4 days, this is up from the 2024 average of 18.24 days. The number of long stay patients' system wide is consistently in a range of 30-40 patients. In 2025 long term bed searches accounted for 9394 avoidable inpatient care days with an estimated expense of \$6.3 million dollars.

Today we have 38 long stay nursing home patients with an average length of stay over 30 days waiting to find a bed. Thirty of the patients are at Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center. This negatively impacts the ability of critically ill patients in need of tertiary care to be admitted as beds are occupied by patients no longer needing our care. The 38 patients have a combined length of stay of 3240 days – an average of 85.3 days each.

It is our impression that the acute care long stay challenge has changed from facilities with closed beds due to staffing challenges to the cumulative impact of so many beds closing in our state. Hancock County has no nursing facilities while other rural counties only have one. The aging patient population demand for this level of care exceeds the

current capacity. From 2021 through 2025 – 751 nursing home beds closed. Some have converted to residential care or PNMI status resulting in increased pressure on these facilities to accept higher acuity patients due to the lack of NF level of care capacity. The lack of long-term care specialty beds – geropsych, bariatric, neurobehavioral and ventilator care is a chronic challenge that started long before the pandemic. In general, we discharge patients at this level of care to facilities out of state.

As noted, we support the bill before you today, we need to sustain what beds remain in service. Ultimately, we need a long-term plan to bring back nursing facility bed capacity and resolve the chronic lack of access to specialty beds to meet the needs of Maine's aging population.

Thank you.