



Northern Light
Health

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

Office 207.973.5578
Main 207.973.7050

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

LD 2189 An Act to Require Prior Notification of Closures of Labor and Delivery Units and Changes in Maternity or Newborn Care Services by Hospitals as Recommended by the Commission to Evaluate the Scope of Regulatory Review and Oversight over Health Care Transactions That Impact the Delivery of Health Care Services in the State

Testimony in Support with Recommendations

February 18, 2026

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations in support of this will with important recommendation.

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.

Marie Vienneau a Northern Light Health Regional President served on the Commission to Evaluate the Scope of Regulatory Review and Oversight over Health Care Transactions That Impact the Delivery of Health Care Services in the State. The bill before you today represents a recommendation of the Commission, Marie contributed to the development of this recommendation sharing her experience as a senior leader responsible for the closure of the labor and delivery unit at Northern Light Inland Hospital.

During the Commission discussion the Department of Health and Human Services provided information on a policy regarding notice of maternity and/or newborn changes. They noted that as a policy the department lacks enforcement authority to require hospitals participate in the notice process. Thus the recommendation to transition the policy into a law that the department can enforce with licensing authority. We support this recommendation.

The existing policy states that the hospital should provide notice of temporary closure at least 30 days prior to the effective date, and 120 days prior to the effective date for permanent termination of service. **In cases when such notice cannot be done, the hospital should provide notice as soon as reasonably practical for a temporary termination of service.**

During the Commission discussion Marie shared with commission members the challenge experienced by Northern Light Inland Hospital. To ensure access to OB services the hospital relied on temporary physicians referred to as locum providers. The providers care for OB patients for a defined contracted period of time requiring the hospital to recruit permanent or temporary doctors to provide care once the contract ends. After many months of exhaustive work there were no physicians to continue caring for Inland patients once the contract expired requiring a difficult decision to close the OB unit at the hospital. We provided 90-day notice to DHHS prior to the end of the contract. 120-day notice to DHHS wasn't appropriate as we were actively working to continue physician services. Only when it became clear we could not do so was the decision made to close the unit. We worked closely with DHHS during the 90-day period coordinating care for our patients and communicating with regional obstetrical care providers, EMS and the community.

Our example is one of many reasons why hospitals may not be able to comply with a 120-day notice standard. During the Commission discussions sudden disruptions in care were discussed including loss of physicians, surgeons, clinical staff disruptions all occurring with limited notice to the hospital. Some disruptions close OB care temporarily while others can result in permanent closure. We also discussed that hospitals should follow the notice policy when the timeline of the notice can be achieved.

The bill before you today requires a hospital to provide at least 120 days' notice prior to the termination of maternity or newborn care services or of a change in the level of care a hospital provides for maternity and newborn care services. **We ask that the bill be amended to state that in cases when such notice cannot be done the hospital should provide notice as reasonably practical.** This will allow compliance when hospitals simply cannot provide 120-day notice and allow DHHS enforcement authority should a finding be made that a hospital could have complied with the requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.