



LD 1807 An Act To Expand Nursing Education Programs

Testimony in Support February 22, 2022

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Marie Vienneau, I am a Senior Vice President with Northern Light Health and serve as President of C.A. Dean and Mayo hospitals, I am also a registered nurse. 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 member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices, long term care 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 over 12,000 employees statewide.

Northern Light Health is dedicated to supporting nursing education programs as they work to create the future nursing force for Maine. Our nursing leaders, managers and preceptors work with nursing faculty providing thousands of hours of clinical experiences in our hospitals and health care settings. We offset the cost of nursing education with tuition support, and we encourage Northern Light Health nurses to serve as adjunct faculty. Our experience demonstrates that nurses from Maine who complete nursing education programs in the state are more likely to stay in Maine after graduation.

In the years before COVID-19 Northern Light Health had a consistent trend of recruiting 200-300 RN's annually to work in our health care settings. Today we are recruiting for 500 RN's. It is well known that Maine's RN workforce is older than nurses nationally with many nurses choosing to retire from practice. The intensity of care provided to COVID-19 patients has also increased the need for additional nursing professionals. We are in full support of the bill before you today that provides funding to increase the student capacity of the community college nursing education programs.

The community college nursing education programs are outstanding partners for Northern Light Health. In addition to our traditional role supporting clinical placements for students we have also worked together to develop new education partnerships addressing the unique needs of rural hospitals and nursing facilities. Hospitals participating in the rural partnership dedicate a masters prepared nurse to serve as on-site faculty for community college nursing students at our hospitals. The students complete their clinical experiences in our community with oversight from our hospital

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Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mayo Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Northern Light Laboratory
Northern Light Pharmacy
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

faculty staff and attend community college lectures via technology. The students graduate with an associate degree in nursing and launch their nursing careers in our rural communities. C.A. Dean Hospital, Mayo Hospital, Maine Coast Hospital and Sebecook Valley Hospital all participate in this highly successful program. Thus far we have supported approximately 30 community college nursing students in the rural partnership program.

The community college is uniquely positioned to partner with Northern Light Health and other health care employers to graduate associate degree prepared registered nurses who are then employed and supported to advance to bachelor's degree nursing education with the tuition cost supported by the Northern Light Health and healthcare employers throughout the State.

I ask for your support to pass this important legislation supporting the future of the nursing workforce.

Thank you.