

Sen. Heather Sanborn, Senate Chair  
Rep. Denise Tepler, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services  
c/o Committee Clerk Christian Ricci  
Cross Building, Room 220,  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

February 17, 2021

Dear Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Committee,

The American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) appreciates the opportunity to submit written comments in support of L.D. 295 as introduced before the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services in the public hearing on February 18, 2021.

On behalf of our hundreds of Maine nurse practitioner (NP) members, representing approximately one-quarter of the entire Maine NP workforce and their patients, AANP recommends supporting this legislation.

Maine faces unique healthcare challenges: regional and cultural divisions in equity, uneven economic opportunity, wide-spread chronic disease, and long-standing provider shortages and underserved communities everywhere from downtown cities to the rural areas in the northern county.

Mainers have grown to appreciate and rely on NP care. Maine NPs often practice in very challenging environments, making do with limited resources and caring for families and seniors that lack economic security and have multiple chronic needs. Nurse practitioners who choose to practice in Maine are devoted to their patients and the overall health of the state.

For years, the Maine nursing community has been working to retire unnecessary bureaucratic barriers between NPs and their patients. With the support of the legislature, progress has been made. Maine state law authorizes NPs to evaluate, diagnose, treat, prescribe medications, and manage patients under the oversight of the Board of Nursing—for nearly two decades. This regulatory model has contributed to improved access and a more efficient health care system for patients across the state.

However, Maine can do even better. And that is what L.D. 295 is designed to do.

Currently under Maine law, it is illegal for licensed Maine nurse practitioners (NPs) to practice their profession and care for patients without completing at least 24-months in a supervisory agreement with a physician, nurse practitioner or employed by a facility that has a physician medical director.

At AANP, we hear from Maine members who experience challenges finding and retaining supervising providers, especially in underserved areas of the state. This can mean that NPs who desire to practice in rural and underserved areas are unable to locate supervisors and forgo establishing practices in these areas and some leave the state.

NPs who are motivated to practice in outlying areas share that this regulatory barrier makes it more difficult and less attractive to return to a rural area once they have completed this mandated period because they and their families have become embedded in communities where they began their practice.

**There is no evidence** that these mandated contract periods are necessary or beneficial for patients or providers - this outdated law is the result of prior political compromise more than twenty years ago.

Over the last two decades, this has been an unnecessary regulatory barrier that is impacting the state's ability to recruit and retain nurse practitioners and meet the needs of Maine's rural and aging population.

The fix to this issue is LD 295. These changes have been tried and tested in Maine and other states:

- This bill would make permanent the temporary emergency waiver of Maine's 24-month supervision requirement under the COVID-19 Executive Action that went into effect last year in March of 2020 to increase the availability of qualified providers.
- Eliminating this workforce barrier will make Maine more competitive in recruiting nurse practitioners to meet the state's needs. This bill would align Maine with several states across the country, including neighboring New Hampshire, that have never required NP licensees to have a state-mandated, legal agreement with another provider as a precondition of serving patients.
- AANP supports this legislation as it would maintain the existing scope of practice for NPs in Maine and bring the state into alignment with national regulatory standards. NP licensees would still be required to complete nationally accredited graduate NP programs that include advanced didactic and clinical education and pass and maintain national certification as a condition of licensure. Maine's high standards for practice and professional accountability would be maintained.

If enacted, this bill would help to provide added patient care options by reducing unnecessary regulation. On behalf of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and our Maine membership, we urge support of LD 295.

Sincerely,



**Sophia L. Thomas, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, PPCNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP**  
President and Interim Chief Executive Officer,  
American Association of Nurse Practitioners