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26 Years of Full Practice Authority as Healthcare Providers for the People of Maine

February 24, 2021

RE: Testimony in support of LD 265, an Act to Provide women Access to Affordable Postpartum Care

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Pam Cahill, I live Woolwich and write today on behalf of the Maine Nurse Practitioner Association in support of LD 265. I serve as the Executive Director of MNPA.

MNPA supports this bill and thanks Representative Carney, again, and the co-sponsors for bringing the legislation back this year. As you know, this bill was presented to the 129th Legislature and was voted unanimously ought to pass as amended, but did not make it through the process because of the abbreviated session due to the COVID pandemic.

Nurse Practitioners pride themselves in their ability to care for their patients. Postpartum patients require continued care for themselves and their infants. Losing MaineCare benefits early on in the postpartum period does not allow access to healthcare services that would be in the best interest of new moms and babies. Many women struggle in the postpartum period and are at greater risk for postpartum depression (affecting nearly 15% of women according to the National Institute of Mental Health) and other health sequelae, which cannot be diagnosed or treated if patients are unable to seek care due to a loss of benefits.

A lack of benefits early on in the postpartum period may also contribute to further stress among new mothers at a time which is often already complex and precarious, and stress itself can be a contributing factor in the development of postpartum depression. We feel that it is to the advantage of new moms and new families, as well as to the overall health and well-being of Maine communities, to make postpartum care available for MaineCare patients for the extended period of time as proposed in this bill.

Should LD 265 pass, MNPA encourages Maine DHHS to take the necessary steps to obtain a waiver or state plan amendment to implement the language which changes Maine Care coverage for women and their babies from 60 days to 12 months.

On Behalf of the Maine Nurse Practitioner Association, I urge the committee to support LD 265.