



TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

In Support Of

[LD 119](#) - *An Act To Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs by Amending the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program*

February 9, 2020

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee, my name is Jeff Austin and I am presenting testimony in support of LD 119 on behalf of the Maine Hospital Association.

The Maine Hospital Association (MHA) represents all 36 community-governed hospitals including 33 non-profit general acute care hospitals, 2 private psychiatric hospitals, and 1 acute rehabilitation hospital.

The issue of finding sufficient nursing staff is a challenge all across Maine. Hospitals in Maine have programs, such as loan repayment programs, to recruit and retain nurses.

As you've heard, one of the barriers to sufficient nursing workforce is the difficulty in having sufficient nurse faculty available to help create more new nurses.

Last year, the Maine Hospital Association conducted a survey looking at what hospitals are doing now to enhance the existing nursing corps.

Nurse Faculty. Many of the hospitals indicated that they employed nurses that also worked as professors but none indicated that they provided a direct subsidy which paid the nurse to be a professor and teach.

Nurse Preceptors. We didn't find any hospitals that hired nurses solely as preceptors. Some of the hospitals indicated that their "regular" nurses fulfilled this role as part of their normal duties and a few mentioned a minor "differential payment" for this service.

Dedicated Education Unit. Several of the hospitals indicated that they have dedicated units and MHA estimates the statewide support for these units to be approximately \$2.3 million.

Simulation Labs. These are very expensive undertakings. At least two hospitals have simulation labs.

Residency Program. A number of hospitals indicated that they have residency programs; it would appear that the total amount of subsidy statewide would be approximately \$6.5 million.

Total Current Hospital Expenditures. So, in total our best statewide estimate of the amount that hospitals currently directly subsidize nursing education programs would be approximately \$8.8 million. Again, this does not include the loan repayment or tuition reimbursement programs we have for our employees who attend various programs.

Unless the faculty shortage is addressed, we will unnecessarily continue to deny qualified candidates from pursuing a career in nursing and we will continue to experience workforce shortages for nurses across settings.

The irony of our support for this legislation is that the bill creates a subsidy to help incentivize nurses to leave hospitals and go teach. That's how strongly hospitals feel this issue needs to be addressed.

We urge you to vote **LD 119** "Ought to Pass."

Thank you.