



**LD 119: An Act To Increase Faculty in Nursing
Education Programs by Amending the Nursing
Education Loan Repayment Program**

Testimony in Support

February 10, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee, my name is Laurie Belden and I serve as the executive director of the Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine -- a membership organization representing home care, home health care and hospice providers across the State.

Annually, our provider members deliver care to more than 45,000 clients in their residences across Maine, traveling more than 20 million miles. Collectively, home care, home health care and hospice members employ more than 7,000 staff – making this sector one of Maine’s largest employers.

Nurses are firmly positioned at the front lines of home care, home health care and hospice and have risen to the occasion during our current public health emergency. Our nurses work tirelessly and are asked to work exhaustive hours, which has only amplified the high demand in Maine for nurses.

The shortage of nurses will continue to intensify as the caregiver workforce ages and the demand for in-home services increases with Maine’s aging population, all while Maine nursing programs continue to experience a lack of faculty to meet the growing workforce demand.

Fifteen years ago, the Legislature passed the Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program with the aspiration of repaying loans up to \$4,500 for a master’s degree and up to \$6,000 for a doctoral degree—but the program was ultimately never funded. At this crisis point, we implore you to pass this bill to fund the NFLRP. By doing so, loan caps will be adjusted to reflect the current cost of obtaining nursing degrees and nurses with advanced degrees will be incentivized to consider teaching to help bolster the faculty within Maine’s nursing education programs.

Maine needs to recruit and retain nurses now more than ever and appropriate funding of the Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program is an essential step in shoring up the clinical workforce.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of this critical bill.

Laurie Belden
Executive Director
Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine
laurie@homecarealliance.org
www.HomeCareAlliance.org