



**Testimony by William Norbert  
Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager**

**Neither For Nor Against L.D. 119**

***An Act to Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs by  
Amending the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program***

**February 9, 2021**

**Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development,  
Economic Advancement, and Business**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business:

My name is Bill Norbert. I am the Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager at the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). I live in Brunswick and am here to testify Neither For Nor Against L.D. 119, *An Act to Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs by Amending the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program*.

This bill would amend the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, which never has been funded by the Legislature or operated by FAME. The bill proposes three changes to the program:

1. It extends eligibility to apply to individuals who are currently enrolled in master's or doctoral degree programs;
2. It specifies that applicants must indicate an intention to work as full-time nursing faculty in a nursing education program in the state, and increases that required commitment from three years to five years after acceptance into the nursing education loan repayment program; and
3. It increases the maximum amount of loans eligible for repayment under the program from \$4,500 to \$30,000 for a master's degree and from \$6,000 to \$60,000 for a doctoral degree.

The program, although in statute since 2005, never has been funded by the Legislature. Although we have no objection to the proposed changes, there is no program currently operating. If the Legislature wishes to make funding for this program a priority, we would have no objection administering it so long as it is properly funded and our reasonable administrative costs are met.

Two years ago, a virtually identical bill, LD 799, was considered by this committee. There was numerous, compelling testimony at the public hearing about the need for such a program in our state, especially considering the shortage of nurse educators and pending retirements. An amendment fashioned by allied health professionals and stakeholders replaced the bill and proposed a new, broader loan repayment program, to be administered by FAME, for health care providers, including nurse educators, who agree to live and work in the state for a minimum of five years. Under the proposed program, FAME would pay up to \$30,000 per year and the lesser of \$150,000 in aggregate and 50% of a loan recipient's outstanding loan balance. The amendment established a fund for the program (with a \$1 million appropriation), set parameters for the administration of the program, and established an advisory committee to guide the work of FAME in administering the program. It was carried over to the Second Session of the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature and died on the Appropriations Table when the Legislature adjourned.

This session Representative Bailey has submitted a bill reflecting this prior amendment/proposal (bill unprinted). The committee may wish to consider this bill in conjunction with his proposal.

Thank you for your consideration of the bill. I will be happy to answer any questions you have.