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Good morning Chairs Curry and Roberts and Members of the Joint Committee Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement. I'm Lori Parham, State Director for AARP Maine. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan social mission organization with more than 200,000 members across the state.

I am testifying in support of **LD 119 An Act to Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs by Amending the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program.**

Nurses are central to consumers' good health, especially within a changing health care system. They are positioned across the health care system to provide high quality health care, increase access to health care services, and keep costs down. Yet, as our population ages and requires more complex health care, we're facing a shortage of nurses.

The problem is not a lack of interest in nursing. Instead, a shortage of nursing faculty is forcing nursing schools across the country to turn away tens of thousands of qualified applicants each year, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, due largely to a severe shortage of faculty to teach nursing students.

Meeting the demands of an aging population requiring more complex health care in non-hospital settings is even more difficult when combined with a shortage of primary care providers.

Nurses with advanced skills and preparation can provide Americans access to high quality, cost-efficient care. Yet, the majority of practicing nurses (60 percent) enter the profession with an associate's degree. This level of education, while an important contribution to the nursing workforce, does not create a strong pipeline for graduate level education. Simply put, Americans need more advanced practice nurses, those with graduate degrees.

In 2010, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation joined AARP Foundation and AARP to found The Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action, a nationwide initiative designed to harness the power of nursing to help all Americans lead longer, healthier lives. Because nurses are uniquely woven

into the fabric of the community—in schools, workplaces, homes, prisons, hospitals, assisted living facilities, and other community spaces—they are positioned to be a more powerful part of improving health and health equity.

We are all aware of the challenges Maine faces due to our rural nature and the age of our population. Growing our nurse workforce is even more critical here. We are sensitive to the fiscal priorities this legislature is considering but believe this is an important and sound investment in the future of Maine’s health workforce.

We respectfully ask for your support of this important bill.

Lori Parham, Ph.D.
State Director, AARP Maine