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Testimony of Representative Anne Perry In Support of LD 119, "An Act To Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs by Amending the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program"
February 9, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. I am Rep. Anne Perry and I represent nine communities in Washington County. I am here to testify in support of LD 119, "An Act To Increase Faculty in Nursing Education Programs by Amending the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program."

Maine is facing a serious projected shortage of nurses in the coming years. The aging population of registered nurses is the primary reason behind this, as 30 percent of all registered nurses were above age 55, according to the Center for Health Affairs data, with nearly 50 percent nurses above 55 in some regions.

Health care and educational institutions are partnering across the state to help maximize graduation numbers and on-the-job placements, but a lack of faculty and nursing labs mean that the target of 1,050 annual nursing graduates is unlikely. According to the USM data, nursing programs across the state rejected 1,204 qualified applicants in 2017 because they didn't have enough faculty.

To give you an example of difficulties finding Nursing Faculty I refer you to the case of Washington County Community College. Several years ago, they were preparing to introduce a nursing program with the help of the local hospital in Calais. They were preparing a nursing lab and looking for qualified faculty and could only find one. As a result, WCCC partnered with Northern Maine Community to be able to offer some part of the program with the ability to enroll only eight students a year.

In order to ensure that we are able to begin to put a dent into the need for nurses we must offer the opportunity for educators to access a loan repayment program to bring them to and keep them in Maine.

Thanks you very much for your consideration.