

Matthew Simpson
Portland
LD 1854

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, I'm Matthew Simpson. I am here on my own time to speak in support of LD 1854.

I am a Public Health Nurse with the Maine CDC, and my home office is in Portland. Our Portland Team is responsible for both Cumberland and York Counties. Public Health Nurses go into our communities throughout the State and provide Mother/Baby Prenatal and Postpartum assessments, education, and supplies; we assist State Epidemiologists and TB State Consultants in preventing the spread of tuberculosis and assisting with its eradication from our State; we provide primary pediatric vaccines to our children in Maine who have barriers to access. Vaccinations we provide not only protect our patients, the children of Maine, but they also protect our communities from preventable diseases.

We are the first responders in providing vaccines in health emergencies and outbreaks. We provide free, licensed professional service and care to the most vulnerable Mainers in both urban and rural settings. In the Portland Office we have nine Public Health Nursing Positions with a Supervisor Position: currently we are a team of two RNs with no supervisor. In fact, we have not had a Portland Supervisor for a year. It is common knowledge that the healthcare field has been struggling through and after the global pandemic, but the State of Maine Public Health Nursing Salaries are a major obstacle in recruiting and retaining staff. I am not lying when I tell you I get at least 2-3 job offers daily from recruiters offering \$2500-3500/ week with benefits. In my current salary position I make \$1300/week. Even other healthcare facilities in Maine offer sign-on bonuses from \$5,000-\$20,000 in addition to their higher salaries.

With an influx of New Mainers, with Primary Care being a rarer resource in rural parts of our state, Public Health Nursing is needed now more than ever. We are a dedicated group of nurses that should make Maine proud. However, we need more RNs, and low salary is the major barrier for the recruitment of Public Health Nurses in Cumberland and York Counties. I ask you to pass LD 1854. Thank you for your time and consideration.