



State of Maine
130th Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
May 18, 2021

Emily Ferry, Workforce Program Manager, on behalf of the Maine Primary Care Association

Supporting:

LD 1597 “An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Strengthen Maine's Health Care Workforce”

Sponsored by Representative Pierce

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Emily Ferry and I am the Workforce Program Manager at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). We are pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 1597.

Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA) is a membership organization that represents the collective voices of Maine’s 20 Community Health Centers, which provide high quality, primary and preventive medical, behavioral health and dental services for 1 in 6 Mainers.

For more than 35 years, MPCA has provided technical assistance and training, housed relevant programs and services, and advocated on behalf of Maine’s healthcare safety net and the hundreds of thousands of patients it serves each year.

Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA) supports this bond proposal, which would support the University of New England’s (UNE) plan to relocate its College of Osteopathic Medicine and create the Institute for Interprofessional Education and Practice (IIEP) on its campus in Portland, Maine. In addition, the bond would provide funding to health centers and other sites across the State that provide clinical training opportunities for students.

MPCA has a longstanding partnership with the University of New England. UNE trains more of our health professionals than any other institution. The quality of their graduates is excellent and the care their trainees give to patients is superior.

UNE’s plan to create a healthcare campus in Portland and establish an integrated professional education program is another meaningful step towards improving an already great institution and toward enhancing Maine’s healthcare workforce. Educating physicians alongside all other health professions will improve the University’s training, which will translate into better care for patients in our communities statewide.

As part of their curriculum, UNE sends students for clinical rotations at many of our member Health Centers. By experiencing firsthand what it’s like to work at a Community Health Center, students become familiar with our culture and our approach to delivering care. The interprofessional education they receive at UNE prepares these students to offer patients across Maine the comprehensive, holistic care they need. Additionally, these students become an important part of our local healthcare delivery systems and forge deep bonds within these communities. As a result, many of the students end up working in the communities where they have had their clinical experience after graduation.

That kind of intensive educational experience helps us serve rural and underserved communities in Maine. Combining that with a commitment to telehealth, we will be able to provide world class services in every corner of Maine through this partnership.

On behalf of the patients, staff, and volunteers at Maine’s Community Health Centers, we urge passage of LD1597.

Thank you for considering our comments, and please do not hesitate to contact me directly at eferry@mepca.org with any follow up questions.

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