

# MaineHealth

## MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community  
Health Network  
LincolnHealth  
MaineHealth Care At Home  
Maine Behavioral Healthcare  
Memorial Hospital  
Maine Medical Center  
Mid Coast-Parkview Health  
NorDx  
Pen Bay Medical Center  
Southern Maine Health Care  
Synernet  
Waldo County General Hospital  
Western Maine Health

## Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable  
Care Organization

## MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health  
New England Rehabilitation  
Hospital of Portland  
St. Mary's Health System

## Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth in Support of LD 1095, “An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Purchase 4 Nursing Simulators for Use by the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System”

Thursday, April 22, 2021

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1095, “An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Purchase 4 Nursing Simulators for Use by the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System.”

MaineHealth is Maine’s largest integrated non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. MaineHealth is also the state’s largest private employer with over 23,000 care team members, but we are facing significant workforce shortages and have invested heavily in creative and innovative solutions in an effort to fill the current 1,800 openings across the system. These programs cover a broad spectrum from developing entry level employees in front line positions from Environmental Services to training tomorrow’s physicians.

Across the country, and like many rural states, Maine faces a shortage of healthcare professionals, which presents particular challenges as we seek ways to improve the health of our communities. These challenges are compounded by current and predicted state trends in the population growth of a rapidly aging population.

In January 2017, a shortage of 3,200 RN’s by 2025 in Maine was predicted if nursing education programs did not expand enrollments and graduates. It was estimated that in order to meet nursing workforce demands we would need to graduate an additional 400 new nurses per year over and above the approximate 750 that graduated in 2016. To date, in 2020, we have not begun to expand the numbers of new grads given that only 795 graduates passed licensing exams on their first attempt in 2019. Of those, not all stayed in Maine.

To address the growing shortage of nurses, MaineHealth has made significant investments in our recruitment efforts and to help “grow our

own.” MaineHealth has partnered with all 15 nursing programs in the state to help our own employees grow in their careers, by supporting entry level employees’ enrollments in nursing programs, and the progressive development of our nurses who wish to advance their education and careers by pursuing a master’s or doctoral degrees.

In 2020, MaineHealth filled 759 RN positions with external hires, including new graduate nurses, but 457 positions remain vacant. It is clear that our efforts are not enough and more faculty and clinical instructors are desperately needed to increase enrollment in the state’s nursing programs and meet the growing demand for nurses. Additionally, clinical simulation labs are critical for the required hands on clinical experience, and it is for that reason that we are supporting LD 1095, which will provide the necessary funding for four nursing simulators.

Legislative action is needed if we’re going to be successful in meeting the increased workforce demands of our state. With that said, we applaud Sen. Matt Pouliot for his leadership and sponsorship of this critical legislation before you today.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.