

Testimony from Rebecca Bell in Support of LD273
An Act to Sustain the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of this committee. My name is Rebecca Bell and I am here to testify in support of LD273, An Act to Sustain the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program.

As I watched my grandmother battle ovarian cancer at seven years old, I was resolute in my decision to become a doctor. I was perplexed by the mysterious illness that was taking my grandmother's life and motivated to understand more. My interest in medicine continued to grow as I studied biology at Williams College and Leukemia at the Jackson Labs in Bar Harbor. Studying cancer in a laboratory was captivating, but I craved the lasting relationships I could form with patients in a more clinical setting. As I applied to medical school I was immediately drawn to the Tufts Maine Track and the opportunity to receive a practical medical education right here in Maine. I was initially stunned by the over \$300,000 of medical school debt I was about to take on, but the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship program significantly relieved this burden and allowed me to focus on serving Maine's wonderful population.

In my third year of medical school I had the unique experience of participating in a longitudinal clerkship program through the Tufts Maine Track. Through this program I conducted my clinical work at a more rural Maine hospital and formed long-term relationships with patients as I assisted in their care.

Perhaps the most memorable experience of my education to date was caring for an Angolan asylum seeker through the 9 months of her pregnancy and assisting in the delivery of her beautiful baby boy. At each obstetrics visit, we covered the changes in her healthy pregnancy, and always left time to discuss the ways in which she and her family were adjusting to the Maine winters. As it turned out, her daughters were much more excited by the cold and snow! Maine's population is constantly evolving, and the people that inhabit this beautiful state are some of the most compassionate, welcoming, and hard-working that I have ever encountered. Forming long-term relationships with the people of Maine is what motivates me daily to pursue a career as a physician and I look forward to the opportunity to hear their stories as I serve Maine's population in the future.

I am speaking to you today because I have been a recipient of the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship for which I am endlessly grateful. This scholarship provided me with the flexibility to pursue a path that would match my passion with community needs. For me, that path is Otolaryngology, or Head and Neck Surgery. Maine has the highest rate of new oral cavity or

pharyngeal cancers in the United States, but we continue to see a shortage of otolaryngologists in the rural corners of our state where they're needed most.

As Maine's population continues to grow and diversify we need to be able to support Maine's future physicians from all backgrounds. This scholarship has significantly reduced the financial hardship of pursuing a medical education and I hope it can continue to open doors for others who want to serve Maine's wonderful population.

I urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD273, "An Act to Continue the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program." Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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