

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Tyler Bernaiche, and I am writing to testify in strong support of LD 273, An Act To Sustain the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program

I am a “county boy” who never would have pursued a career in medicine if it weren’t for the “Maine Track” program and the significant financial assistance of the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship. Raised in Fort Fairfield, I had a modest upbringing in and around the potato fields of northern Maine. My father is a mechanic. I don’t have any doctors or lawyers in the family and we certainly didn’t have any doctor friends. The pathway to higher education was one I had to forge with minimal guidance or familial support. I remember being a student at the University of Maine in Orono while pursuing my Bachelor of Science in Biology and thinking that attending medical school was out of my reach financially. I had already amassed significant student loan debt while working on my undergraduate degree. It wasn’t until I heard about the “Maine Track” program that I actually began to seriously consider applying to medical school. This program targets Mainers like me in order to increase access to quality medical care for my friends, family, and neighbors. The Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship helped to significantly reduce the financial pressure so I could focus on finding the best career fit for me. Just the presence of such a program helped to give me the confidence to pursue what I once thought was unobtainable. Northern Maine now has a lifelong colorectal surgeon thanks to this program.

I graduated from the Maine Track in 2010 and then went on to complete my general surgery training at Inova Fairfax Medical Center in northern Virginia followed by a colorectal surgery fellowship at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. Today, I am practicing as a colorectal surgeon at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor, ME. I also travel up to Presque Isle one week a month to see patient’s at AR Gould. This partnership allows for me to use my advanced training in robotic surgery at Eastern Maine Medical Center while also providing much needed specialty care to patients in Aroostook County. Through the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship, the state of Maine believed in and invested in me, and it fills me with such pride to be back serving the community I grew up in.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

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