

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 481, “An Act to Propose a General Fund Bond Issue To Train Workers in High-demand Sectors and Support the State's 10-year Economic Plan Goal of Increasing Wages by 10 Percent”

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 481, “An Act to Propose a General Fund Bond Issue To Train Workers in High-demand Sectors and Support the State's 10-year Economic Plan Goal of Increasing Wages by 10 Percent.”

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.

Like many rural states, Maine faces a shortage of healthcare professionals and this shortage presents particular challenges as we seek ways to improve the health of our rural communities. These challenges are compounded by having the oldest population in the nation. In fact, over the next decade, MaineHealth estimates that the population within its service area will experience less than one percent growth while the number of individuals 65 or older will increase by 25 percent. It truly is a perfect storm – a large percentage of our workforce is nearing retirement at a time that our rapidly aging patient population will require more health care services.

Legislative action is needed if we’re going to be successful in meeting the increased workforce demands of our state. It is imperative that we look at innovative programs and policy changes that support, attract and retain individuals new to the State in order to address this shortage. With that said, we applaud Rep. Sawin Millett for his leadership and sponsorship of this critical legislation before you today and ask that targeted investments

are made to train workers in the health care field. We couldn't agree more with his statement – “the need is more immediate than a November bond question would satisfy. Further, the opportunity to use potential one-time funding sources – using either state or federal, or both – opens the door for making a bold funding commitment this session.”

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