

LD 1797 An Act to Expand Maine’s Health Care Workforce by Expanding Educational Opportunities and Providing Tax Credits

Sponsored by Senate President Troy Jackson



Background

Critical healthcare worker shortages existed in Maine prior to the pandemic and have been exacerbated by it. These shortages limit access to quality care, increase cost of care, and lower the quality of life in Maine. This legislation will address Maine’s healthcare workforce shortages with a three-pronged approach, by providing ongoing funding to support 1) educators, 2) students, and 3) employers.

- In 2021, Maine had a shortage of 2,250 RNs (17%)¹
- To maintain current service levels, Maine will need an additional 120 primary care physicians by 2030 (9% increase)²
- 15 out of 16 Maine counties have federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)³

Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program (Existing) – A lack of faculty and nurse educators means we struggle to educate enough nurses to fulfill workforce needs. The program provides loans to Master’s candidates (\$20,000) and PhD candidates (\$40,000) in exchange for a 3-year commitment to teach.

Maine Healthcare Provider Loan Repayment Program (Existing) – This program makes loan repayments to eligible participants to address critical workforce shortages in health professional shortage areas or medically underserved areas throughout the state. It was capitalized once by the State of Maine with \$1M. There were over 1,000 applicants and 18 awards which consumed the entire \$1M.

Doctors For Maine’s Future Scholarship Program (Existing) – This highly successful program is a public-private partnership between the State and Maine medical schools that provides scholarships to Maine students who attend these medical schools. In turn, the schools must match the scholarships 1:1. According to FAME, thus far, 148 Doctors for Maine’s Future scholars have graduated from medical school, and of the 60 who are now employed, 58% are working in Maine.

Maine Health Care Education Training and Medical Residency Fund (New) – In addition to classroom preparation, health care students and resident physicians are required to train in clinical settings. Unfortunately, Maine has a significant shortage of clinical placements for students, forcing many to leave Maine to train. This bill specifically targets expanding clinical training in rural settings where the shortage of physicians, nurses and other healthcare workers are greatest, and it is modeled after a current DHHS (ARPA) grant program.

New Nurse Retention Credit (New) – Retention of nurses who have completed a Maine nursing education program and entered the workforce is essential. The first years of nursing practice are the most challenging. The proposed new nurse retention tax credit is focused on supporting new nurses during this critical period. The program would provide a \$500 credit for three years for up to 900 new nurses annually.

¹ Cyprus Research Group. “The Nursing Workforce in Maine: Trends & Forecasts.” January 2022. <http://www.themha.org/policy-advocacy/Issues/Workforce/2022Nurse-Forecast-Report.aspx>

² Petterson, Stephen M; Cai, Angela; Moore, Miranda; Bazemore, Andrew. State-level projections of primary care workforce, 2010-2030. September 2013, Robert Graham Center, Washington, D.C.

³ See: <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find>