



## **The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony In Favor of LD 899**

### **“An Act To Increase Access to Health Care by Attracting Qualified Physicians to Maine”**

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Committee On Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as the policy analyst at the Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 899.

You’re all familiar with the shortages in health care personnel in Maine, particularly in remote parts of the state. Physicians are stretched thin, and new doctors are desperately needed to provide adequate health care access and quality for Mainers.

In 2010, there were only 45.7 primary care doctors per 100,000 residents in Washington County, about half the national average -- and other counties’ numbers weren’t much better.<sup>1</sup> Statewide, Maine had nearly 30 percent fewer PCPs than the national average. A study has found that Maine will need 120 additional PCPs by 2030 merely to maintain the status quo, much less begin to address the unmet need for primary care.<sup>2</sup> While already commonplace, physician shortages are likely to grow more severe as tens of thousands of Mainers enroll under Medicaid expansion in the months ahead.

This is a complex and multifaceted challenge, but one fruitful opportunity to make Maine a more welcoming state for physicians is to streamline medical licensing regulations which impose a significant cost, in terms of time and money, on doctors.<sup>3</sup>

Maine has already made commendable progress toward streamlining the licensure process for physicians, but there’s more to be done. Since Maine joined sixteen other states in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact in 2017, doctors in other member states seeking to practice in Maine enjoy an expedited review process without compromising patient safety.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pressherald.com/2014/05/31/in-rural-maine-dearth-of-doctors-is-a-growing-crisis/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.graham-center.org/content/dam/rgc/documents/maps-data-tools/state-collections/workforce-projections/Maine.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196\(15\)00796-X/pdf](https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196(15)00796-X/pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://imlcc.org/what-is-the-process/>

Yet the medical profession is one of the most tightly regulated occupations in the country. Moving from one state to another is still an expensive, lengthy, and confusing process for health care professionals, particularly doctors.

More than a decade ago, doctors were already warning that anti-reciprocity rules and complicated licensure requirements were deterring physicians from doing more to address health care needs in underserved areas.<sup>5</sup> By requiring temporary physician licensure within 60 days in cases of emergency or personnel shortages and slashing the licensure fee, this bill makes Maine a little more hospitable to doctors seeking to provide much-needed medical care in our state.

This bill won't reverse Maine's worrying long-term trends in our health care system or eliminate our worsening health personnel crisis, but it will make a difference on the margin, when a doctor is weighing whether to provide temporary assistance to needy communities.

For these reasons, we urge you to support this bill. Thank you.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://thehealthcareblog.com/blog/2008/08/11/volunteer-doctors-blocked-by-red-tape/>