

TO: Labor and Housing Committee

RE: LD 1639, An Act to Address Unsafe Staffing of Nurses and Improve Patient Care

To the Chairs Senator Tipping and Representative Daughtry, Honorable members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

I am writing today to oppose LD 1639, which while well intentioned would have grave impact on the health of our region. Passing of LD 1649 will result in an estimated cost to our local hospitals of \$12.5m (at St. Mary's) and \$14m (at CMH) annually. These costs will impact already tight operating margins and will ultimately be borne by residents in the region. It is estimated that we could lose the adolescent behavior and substance use disorder units at a time of increased need for these services. CMH could lose as many as 34 beds, 6 of which are ICU beds.

These two hospitals combined are our area's largest employers, and together employ ~4,500 people. Healthcare, and hospitals specifically, are already working with a regulatory environment that is burdensome and undermines the sustainability of healthcare as a sector. There is only one other state in the US with mandatory hospital nurse staffing ratios – and for good reason. Once implemented, the costs were high, and the benefits of improved quality were not realized.

We encourage the committee to oppose this legislation and allow our burdened hospital systems to operate with patient care at the core of what they do, and supported staff as the way in which they deliver it. As partners in Strengthen LA, a local workforce initiative, we see first-hand the efforts the hospitals are making to attract talent, retain talent, and develop talent. They are operating in a challenging, post-pandemic labor landscape, and require flexibility – not regulation – to ensure delivery of health services in Maine.

Thank you,
Shanna Cox



President + CEO
Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce