



**Northern Light
Health**

**LD 129 Resolve, to Direct the University of Maine System to Study the Feasibility of
Establishing a Public Allopathic Medical School in Penobscot County**

**Testimony in Support
February 2, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dr. James Jarvis MD, and I am the Director of Clinical Education at Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health speaking in support of this bill.

Northern Light Health member organizations include ten hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, eight nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. 93% of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with over 12,000 employees statewide.

Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center is the host site for 40-45 medical students for their third year of clinical rotations and provides about 35 additional rotations for medical students during their fourth year of training. Most of these students are enrolled in the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine. In addition, Eastern Maine Medical Center sponsors residency and fellowship training programs in family medicine, osteopathic neuromuscular medicine and hospice and palliative care medicine, with a proposed psychiatry residency program under development.

Despite the work being done at EMMC and other health centers and systems across the state to train the next generation of physicians, the current physician workforce shortage is only going to become worse unless some fundamental changes are made for the availability of medical school and residency opportunities to Mainers interested in pursuing medicine as a career. According to a 2018 report from the Center for Health Workforce Studies, nearly 43% of Maine's physicians were over the age of 55. That number rises to over 50% in our most rural counties. In addition, rising costs of medical school education can be prohibitive to students considering entering the field or deter them from pursuing primary care as a specialty. Information collected by the Education Data Initiative found that in 2022, while tuition varies significantly, an out of state student can expect to pay on average \$50,000 more for their degree than their in-state peers.

According to the Graham Center and the American Medical Association, we know that more than half of practicing physicians work within 100 miles of where they trained either in medical school or residency. With limited number of opportunities to train in the northern and western parts of the state, especially in more rural communities,

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Home Care & Hospice
Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mayo Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Northern Light Laboratory
Northern Light Pharmacy
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

exploring the feasibility of expanded medical education, particularly in Penobscot County is necessary. The prospect of a medical school has the ability to recruit more academic-minded physicians. This will lead to quality-trained medical students and the potential for expansion or creation of more residency programs closer to areas sorely needing physicians, especially in primary care specialties. It also has the potential to increase the availability and acceptance of clinical research sorely needed for rural populations. In addition, during the pandemic, Maine led the nation as a model for public and private partnerships with stake holders in government, education and clinical care collaborating for the betterment of our population. The same can be accomplished for improving our healthcare workforce.

In preparation for this bill, I had the opportunity to work with my colleagues at the University of Maine to discuss the structure and process for a feasibility study to establish a medical school. We agreed that the study must include input from the University, Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center and key stakeholders. To assist you in your discussion regarding this bill, I have attached draft language that we developed.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this bill.

Resolve, To Direct the University of Maine System To Study the Feasibility of Establishing A Public Allopathic Medical School in Penobscot County

Sec. 1. Allopathic medical school feasibility study. Resolved: That the University of Maine System shall study and analyze the feasibility of establishing

a public allopathic medical school in Penobscot County. In conducting the study, the University of Maine System shall examine and make recommendations regarding:

1. State and national current and future physician workforce supply and distribution data including in primary and specialty care fields
2. Innovative allopathic medical school models especially those that include partnerships between public universities and nonprofit health care systems
3. School enrollment projections
4. Program content and accreditation standards
5. Required resources including personnel, classrooms, research and clinical laboratories and equipment, student housing, and operating expenses
6. Capacity in the state to support residency training
7. The costs to establish and operate a public allopathic medical school, and funding models that include State appropriations and tuition revenue
8. University of Maine System Board of Trustee policies for creating new programs
9. Impact of establishing an allopathic medical school to existing education and health-related training programs in the state
10. Programs to retain graduates to pursue careers in Maine, especially in rural primary and specialty care with a focus on underserved areas and populations
11. Other programs and partnerships to address physician workforce current and projected needs
12. Opportunities to strengthen health and medical research activities to enhance the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Maine

In performing its duties under this section, the University of Maine System must coordinate with a tertiary hospital medical education program located in Penobscot County and additionally solicit the testimony, advice or participation of representatives of the following organizations:

1. The Maine Center for Workforce Research and Information
2. The Maine Department of Health and Human Services
3. The State Board of Education
4. The VA Maine Healthcare System
5. Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness
6. A statewide association representing Maine hospitals
7. A statewide association representing Maine physicians
8. A statewide association representing Maine primary care providers
9. A medical center in the state with an education and training partnership with a medical school located out of the state
10. A nonprofit community health care network that includes federally qualified health centers
11. An osteopathic medical school based in the state

The University of Maine System is not required under this resolve to undertake work for which it does not have or has not received sufficient resources.

Sec. 2. Report. Resolved: That, by December 1, 2024, the University of Maine System shall submit a report, including recommended legislation and

appropriations requests, based on its study and analysis in section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs. The committee is authorized to submit legislation related to the report to the First Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Sec. 3. Appropriations and allocations.

**UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM, BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
Education and General Activities – UMS 0031**

Initiative: Provides funding for the study of the feasibility of establishing a public allopathic medical school in Penobscot County to serve the state of Maine.

GENERAL FUND	2023-24	2024-25
All Other	\$0	UMAINE \$\$\$
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	_____	_____
	\$0	UMAINE \$\$\$

SUMMARY

This bill requires the University of Maine System to study the feasibility of establishing a public allopathic medical school in Penobscot County. It also provides appropriations to fund the study, which must be done in partnership with a tertiary hospital medical education program located in Penobscot County and be informed by input from a number of relevant health care and related organizations.