



Karen Saylor, MD, President | Jeffrey S. Barkin, MD, President-Elect | Erik N. Steele, DO, FAAFP, Chair, Board of Directors
Andrew B. MacLean, JD, CEO | Dan Morin, Director of Communications & Government Affairs

TO: The Honorable Chip Curry, Chair
The Honorable Tiffany Roberts, Chair
Members, Joint Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

FM: Dan Morin, Director of Communications and Government Affairs

DATE: February 23, 2021

RE: **Support**
LD 273— An Act To Sustain the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program

The Maine Medical Association is the state's largest professional physician organization representing more than 4300 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine and promote the health of all Maine residents.

The Maine Medical Association strongly supports LD 273, which provides ongoing funds for the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program.

The Doctors for Maine's Future Program was designed years ago to provide scholarships for eligible medical students who enroll in a qualifying Maine-based medical school program. Currently, Tufts University School of Medicine Maine Medical Center *Maine Track* Program and the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine participate in the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program. The goal was to address the shortage of physicians in Maine—particularly in our rural areas—by making available access to high quality and affordable medical education for Maine students.

Maine is one of only 6 states that does not have a state-sponsored medical school. According to a 2017 brief from the Association of American Medical Colleges, the median four-year cost of attendance (COA) for private medical schools was \$306,200, and 232,800 for public medical schools.

The median education debt after completion was \$200,000 and \$180,000, respectively.

The program provides students scholarships that cover approximately 50% of their tuition – or the equivalent of in-state tuition in those states that have their own medical schools. The main goal is to offer Maine students access to affordable medical education near home, graduate with less debt, and because a unique training program that exposes them to rural clinical practice from day one, it makes them more likely to enter primary care and other specialties that are extremely important to Maine.

A 2013 research report in the Journal of the Association of Medical Colleges examined individual-level and medical-school-level factors, including the school's primary care culture, to assess their potential association with medical students' likelihood of practicing primary care. The conclusion: Although individual students' characteristics and preferences drive specialty choice decisions, the prevailing primary care culture at a school also plays a role.

Besides where a student attends medical school, a high percentage of doctors end up practicing within a short drive of the residency programs they attend after medical school. That, combined with Maine not having a public medical school, placed two significant obstacles for Maine's best and brightest who dreamed of careers as physicians would end up in medical school, and even more unlikely they would end up back in Maine if they did. However, most medical students that participate Doctors for Maine's Future Program come back to Maine to practice, and a majority pursue a primary care specialty (Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, and Pediatrics).

Given the success of the Doctors for Maine's Future Program in building our primary care physician network in underserved counties, the Maine Medical Association is strongly supportive of passing LD 273. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments.