

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

Date: March 3, 2021

To: Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Commerce

From: Rachel Olson, Legislative Analyst

**LD 273 “Am Act To Sustain the Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship Program”  
(Zager)**

### SUMMARY

This bill provides ongoing funds to the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 12103-A, which supports medical school scholarships for eligible students who attend a qualifying Maine-based medical school program and have a substantial connection to Maine.

### TESTIMONY

**Proponents:** Rep. Sam Zager, sponsor; Andrew R. Beauchesne, Tufts University School of Medicine, Maine Track; Rebecca K. Bell, Tufts University School of Medicine, Maine Track; Tyler Bernaiche, MD; William Chance, VP for Institutional Advancement at UNE; Rep. Patrick Corey, District 25; James Hamper; Lisa Harvey-McPherson, Northern Light Health; Jodie Hermann, Maine Osteopathic Association; Charm Karunasiri, Tufts University School of Medicine, Maine Track; Juliana L’Heureux, ANA-Maine; Jo Linder, MD, Assistant Dean for Students for the Tufts University School of Medicine MMC-Maine Track Program; Bilan Mohamed, USM student; Dan Morin, Maine Medical Association; Adriana Eurich Nadeau, MD; William Norbert, FAME; Tad Olsen, Tufts University School of Medicine, Maine Track; Dr. Kendra Paradis; Kent Reichel, Tufts University School of Medicine, Maine Track; Caleb Swanberg, MD; Renee Thibodeau, MD;

- Connects learners with Maine communities
- Medical debt is a huge burden, especially for many Mainers and for those people interested in pursuing jobs in rural regions
- No state sponsored medical schools, average debt is just over \$200,000 (just for medical school) – helps reduce this burden
- Scholarship reduces financial hardship; opens the door for others who want to serve Maine people
- This opened up the opportunity to pursue medical school
- This reduces the debt load and encourages students to stay and work in Maine
- This is a valuable recruiting tools for students in Maine
- Represents a strong public-private partnership; must match state funding with private donations
- The program is working and addressed critical shortages in primary care in the state

**Opponents:** None

**Neither for nor against:** None

## **INFORMATION REQUESTS:**

- Katie Fullam Harris, from Maine Health, provided answers [in a memo](#) to the following Committee questions:

### **Overview of Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program**

The Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program was created by the 124th Maine Legislature. The medical scholarships provide a tuition subsidy of \$25,000 per student annually for eligible students who enter qualifying Maine-based medical school programs. For each student funded with a Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship, the participating medical schools fund an additional scholarship on similar terms. The goal of the program is to increase the number of physicians in the state who practice in primary care, underserved specialties or underserved areas of Maine. The Maine Medical Center-Tufts University Medical School and the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine are currently participating in the program.

These are the only Maine-based medical schools, and research shows that medical students are more likely to remain in the state where they complete their educations and residencies.

### **Q: What is considered a close tie to Maine?**

**A:** The Finance Authority of Maine's criteria to qualify for the scholarship include:

- Be enrolled in a qualifying Maine-based medical school program.
- The student must have a substantial connection to the state of Maine and at least one year of residence in Maine for purposes other than education.
- Priority is given to medical students who meet at least two of the following:
  - The student has received a high school diploma, or its equivalent, in Maine,
  - The student has received a baccalaureate degree from a four-year college or university in Maine,
  - The legal residence of the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) is in Maine.

### **Q: How many Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship recipients practice primary care in Maine?**

**A:** According to the Finance Authority of Maine, of the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholars who have finished training, 53% are practicing in Maine (18 of 34) and, of those, 61% are practicing in primary care (11 of 18).

### **Q: When did the Legislature last appropriate funding to the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program?**

**A:** FAME uses \$400,000 of its annual student financial assistance appropriations to help fund this program and the two participating medical schools provide their own match money for the funding for each student awarded a scholarship. The 129th Legislature approved \$800,000 to help sustain the program. The Governor's proposed biennial budget did not continue the funding and, as a result, FAME will need to decrease its annual scholarships awarded from the current four students per school to two students per school for fiscal year 2021-2022. Additionally, this could impact two more students at each school that receive scholarship matching funds provided by the schools themselves.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

- [Fiscal Note Required: Yes](#)
  - This bill includes ongoing General Fund appropriations of \$400,000 per year beginning in fiscal year 2021-22 to the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program administered by the Finance Authority of Maine to support medical school scholarships for eligible students who attend a qualifying Maine-based medical school program and have a substantial connection to Maine.

**LINKS:**

- [LD 273](#)
- [UNE Doctors for Main's Future Brochure](#)

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Statutory Reference:

**§12103-A. Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program**

There is established the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Program, referred to in this section as "the scholarship program," to provide a tuition subsidy of 50% of the cost of attendance annually, up to a maximum of \$25,000 per student annually, for eligible students who enter qualifying Maine-based medical school programs for the purpose of increasing the number of physicians in this State who practice in primary care, underserved specialties or underserved areas of the State. For the purposes of this section, "cost of attendance" means the tuition and fees applicable to an eligible student, together with estimated other expenses reasonably related to cost of attendance at a qualifying Maine-based medical school program. [PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

**1. Eligibility.** For purposes of this section, "eligible student" means a student who meets eligibility requirements set by the authority by rule that include at least the following:

A. The student is or will be enrolled in a qualifying Maine-based medical school program; and [PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

B. The student has a substantial connection to the State as evidenced by factors such as prior education in this State, parental residence in this State and at least one year of non-education-related residence in this State. [PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]  
[PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

**2. Priority.** In awarding scholarships, the authority shall give priority to an eligible student who meets at least 2 of the following provisions:

A. The student has received a high school diploma, or its equivalent, in this State; [PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

B. The student has received a baccalaureate degree from a 4-year college or university in this State; and [PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

C. The legal residence of a parent of the student is in this State. [PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]  
[PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

**3. Allocation.** The total number of scholarships available under the scholarship program must be allocated equally among qualifying Maine-based medical school programs, except that a program may not be allocated more than the number of scholarships for which the program has raised matching funds as of January 1st immediately preceding the scholarship award.  
[PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

**4. Matching funds.** Commencing January 1, 2013, if a qualifying Maine-based medical school program raises matching funds in an amount less than the amount of scholarship funds allocable to it under this section from the State for a given year or does not have a sufficient

number of qualified applicants to fill the number of scholarships allocable to it, the number of scholarships allocated to that program must be reduced accordingly and scholarships must be reallocated for that year to students of other qualifying Maine-based medical school programs. Qualifying Maine-based medical school programs must use funds raised through philanthropic and private medical education fundraising to increase the number of scholarships available to eligible students and must use matching funds to provide no fewer than the number of scholarships allocated to the program by the State in a given academic year.

[PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

**5. Notification.** For each student receiving a scholarship under this section, the student's qualifying Maine-based medical school program must notify the authority of the location of the student's medical residency, specialty and place of employment for each of the 8 years after the student's graduation from the school.

[PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

**6. Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Fund created.** A nonlapsing, interest-earning, revolving fund under the jurisdiction of the authority, known as the Doctors for Maine's Future Scholarship Fund, and referred to in this subsection as "the fund," is created to carry out the purposes of this section. Any unexpended balance in the fund carries over for continued use under this section. The authority may receive, invest and expend on behalf of the fund money from gifts, grants, bequests and donations or other sources in addition to money appropriated or allocated by the State. Money in the fund must be invested by the authority, as provided by law, with the earned income to be added to the fund. Money received by the authority on behalf of the fund, except interest income, must be used for the purposes of this section; interest income may be used for such purposes or to pay student financial assistance administrative costs incurred by the authority.

[PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2009, c. 410, §3 (NEW).

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