Testimony of Tom Edge, MaineHealth
in Support of LD 899, “An Act to Authorize Vaccine Administration by Pharmacy Technicians and Reduce Vaccine Administration Training Requirements for Pharmacists”
Thursday, March 16, 2023

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Tom Edge, Director of Retail Pharmacy Services at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in favor of LD 899, “An Act to Authorize Vaccine Administration by Pharmacy Technicians and Reduce Vaccine Administration Training Requirements for Pharmacists.”

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a continuum of health care services to communities throughout Maine and New Hampshire. Every day, our over 22,000 care team members support our vision of “Working Together so Our Communities are the Healthiest in America” by providing a range of services from primary and specialty physician services to a continuum of behavioral health care services, community and tertiary hospital care, home health care and a lab.

I have worked in retail pharmacies since 2014. Before the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act, it could be difficult to manage vaccinations in a busy retail pharmacy. On a typical day, you have many competing priorities to juggle: answering patient questions in person and on the phone, filling and verifying prescriptions, directing technician staff, and administering vaccinations. When flu shot season comes around, you can have as many as 100 or more flu shots to work into that already busy day. These were accomplished exclusively by a pharmacist. If you were lucky you might get some extra staffing during flu shot season, but many pharmacists were expected to just figure it out.

When the federal government first started discussing the colossal effort that was going to be needed to deliver the first rounds of the COVID vaccine, there must have been a pharmacist in the room, thank goodness. There was no way that that undertaking would have been successful using the same structure as had been used in the past.

When the announcement came that properly trained technicians would be allowed to vaccinate, I was very excited. The day that I announced this in my pharmacy at Pen Bay Medical Center, I had an experienced technician sign up right away. She was in one of the first training classes, and braved a snowstorm to get to Portland for the skills training portion. She was
with us from the very beginning of our public COVID vaccination clinics. She delivered around 2500 vaccines professionally and safely, and that was just one technician. Multiply that by the probably hundreds of technicians that were certified to vaccinate, and you can see that we would have had a much harder time reaching the numbers that we did without them.

For her, this was a point of pride. It gave a technician who had 20 years of technician service under her belt something new to learn, something new to accomplish, and something important to assist with. I don’t see any reason to remove that ability now. It is good for community access to vaccinations, it is good for pharmacists, and it is good for pharmacy technicians.

I also am in favor of the piece of the bill that removes the “within 3 years” portion of the training requirement for pharmacists. Immunizing pharmacists are required to stay up-to-date on immunizations through yearly CEs, and there are many resources available to pharmacists who would like to refresh their training beyond those CEs.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.