

March 2, 2015

Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield, and Honorable Committee Members, my name is Ruben Perez, program director for the sonography program. I live in Oakland Maine, and I am here in support for the legislation before you.

I began the Sonography program at Kennebec Valley Community College in 2007. Up to date, we have trained sixty two sonographers of which 98% have remained working in Maine, specializing and certified to practice in different fields of ultrasound.

Due to lack of monies in the budget, enrollment in the sonography and respiratory therapy programs have been suspended. Suspension is precursor to discontinuation of any program. Administration at KVCC says allied health programs are too expensive to run, specifically sonography and respiratory therapy.

I want to share to you the most important reasons as to why I am in support of the extra funding LD 127 would provide for the Sonography Program at KVCC.

1. It is the only program in the state. It is accredited by CAAHEP (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs). Maine residents who are interested in this career will have to be trained out of state. Local hospitals and clinics will have to pay a substantial amount of money to recruit contract personnel out of state.
2. Baby boomers are retiring at an alarming rate, both in the private sector and in the health care professions to include sonography. In three to five years there will be a shortage once again of trained sonographers.
3. KVCC has a healthy two year waiting list to get into the program. We have 17 students on the waiting list and 67 applicants. There is no problem filling the quota of students.
4. Maine KVCC graduates have a 100% passing rate on the boards.
5. We are the only advanced certificate program in the college. All our accepted students need an associate's degree or higher to enroll in the program. Students in the Sonography program at KVCC are actually getting higher education in a community college setting and community college tuition and upon graduation will earn more , than with their previous Bachelors' or even master's degree.

All our graduate students are employed, half of them before they graduate. They have been hired at health care facilities from York County, to Washington County, to Aroostook County, rendering services across the state of Maine.

6. The KVCC sonography program is on the Best Ultrasound Technician Schools website which is a new website sanctioned by the ARDMS (American Registry of Diagnostic Sonographers).

7. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that in 2011, diagnostic medical sonographers in Maine had a median annual income of \$69,700 (\$33.50/hour). According to the BLS, the bottom 10 percent of sonographers in the state took home \$53,100 (\$25.52/hour), while the top 10 percent earned \$89,600 (\$43.08/hour). These numbers are higher than the national numbers. It expects a 50 percent increase between then and 2020, thus bringing the number of workers up to 390.
8. Within three to five years all sonographers hired by health care providers need to be registered because of government and insurance company reimbursement requirements.

The suspension and discontinuation of the Sonography Program in the community college system and especially in the central Maine region will be detrimental to the continuing higher education for Maine residents. It will have high negative impact on the local allied health care work force. It will have high impact on the recruiting and financial aspect of the local health care facilities. Thank you for considering mine as well as the other testimonies I brought with me today supporting continued Allied Health programing at Kennebec Valley Community College.

Sincerely,

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