

# News Release

## Northern Light Health Announces Endorsement of Question 4

Brewer, Maine (November 1, 2018) — During a press conference this afternoon at Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center, Northern Light Health joined the Maine Hospital Association and the Maine Rural Health Collaborative in announcing their support of Question 4. This Maine ballot question asks voters whether to approve \$49M for the University of Maine System to expand workforce development capacity and to attract and retain students to strengthen Maine’s economy and future workforce.

Steven Rich, vice chair of the Northern Light Health Board of Directors, shares, “Maine’s Nursing Action Coalition estimates that the shortage of nurses will be 2,700 by 2025. The updated estimate reflects the important work underway to increase the number of new nurse graduates from a baseline of 650 annually to 1,050 new nurses each year. We’ve made important progress, but much work remains as we are now at 800 new nurse graduates per year.”

Nursing leaders from clinical and educational programs are working together throughout Maine developing collaborative partnerships to address the state’s nursing workforce challenge. Increasing the number of new graduates to 800 per year consumes our current resources. “If we don’t put additional resources and infrastructure in place for strong nursing programs, we will not be well positioned to meet the future demand for nurses,” commented Lisa Harvey-McPherson, RN, vice president of Government Relations, Northern Light Health. “If approved, Question 4 will provide \$12M towards expanding University of Maine nursing programs. While this is not the full answer to our growing nursing shortfall, it is a large step in the right direction.”

“The Maine University Nursing Workforce Plan will double nursing enrollment and expand nursing education throughout high-need regions of the state,” said James H. Page, chancellor of the University of Maine System. “It will take partnership, innovation, and voter-supported investment to implement the university nursing plan fully. Together, we will work to preserve access to high quality care throughout the state.”

The press conference today included a tour of Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center’s nursing simulation laboratory. The simulation lab is a partnership between local colleges and the medical center to provide staff and future healthcare providers the opportunity to simulate not only emergencies but everyday care delivery systems. This sim lab and the development of dedicated education units will allow movement toward the goal of accommodating double the number of nursing students for clinical rotations and experiences.

“Healthcare providers and educational institutions cannot solve the upcoming nursing shortages separately. By working together, we will be able to meet the promise made to our communities by having the care providers we need to care for our current and future patients,” said Deborah Sanford, MBA, MSN, RN, vice president of Nursing and Patient Care Services.

In addition to Question 4, Northern Light Health is also endorsing Question 5, which asks voters whether they would favor a \$15,000,000 bond issue to improve educational programs by upgrading facilities at all seven of Maine’s community colleges in order to provide Maine people with access to high-skill, low-cost technical and career education. Harvey-McPherson says, “Resources provided by Question 5 will renovate and expand instructional laboratories,

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information technology infrastructure, library services and classrooms needed to support a variety of degrees sought by Northern Light Health member organizations including nursing, medical assistants, and various technology professions.”

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At Northern Light Health, we’re building a better approach to healthcare because we believe people deserve access to care that works for them. As an integrated health delivery system serving Maine, we’re raising the bar with no-nonsense solutions that are leading the way to a healthier future for our state. Our more than 12,000 team members—in our hospitals, primary and specialty care practices, long-term and home healthcare, and ground and air medical transport and emergency care—are committed to making healthcare work for you: our patients, communities, and employees. To learn more about Northern Light Health and our locations across Maine, visit [www.northernlighthealth.org](http://www.northernlighthealth.org).