



February 13, 2020

Dear Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services;

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has advocated for public policy which increases the health, wellness, safety, and economic security of Maine women and girls, with a focus on the most marginalized populations and communities.

We are here today **in support of LD 1613, "An Act Regarding Women's Health and Economic Security."** We thank Speaker Gideon for sponsoring this important bill.

Family planning saves women's lives. Providing contraception to 90 percent of those in need around the world would save the lives of 67,000 women and 440,000 infants annually, because doing so would prevent unwanted, high-risk pregnancies and unsafe abortions, along with 564,000 stillbirths and almost 28 million unwanted live births undergone every year.¹

Family planning supports the overall economy and women's economic security. Delaying a birth can reduce the gap in pay between working mothers and their childless peers, and planned pregnancies can reduce women's chances of needing public assistance.² It is estimated that for every \$1 invested in family planning programs, federal and state governments save \$7.09 in part because of unintended pregnancies that were prevented from publicly supported contraception.³

Birth control supports racial and geographic equity. More than half of people on birth control are on it for health reasons in addition to birth control, such as treating or responding to cysts or endometriosis; women of color are particularly susceptible to ovarian cysts⁴ and are disproportionately affected by restrictions to birth control. Additionally, rural Mainers may turn to family planning clinics for the majority of their essential health care needs.

¹ Ahmed, S., et al (2017). Maternal deaths averted by contraceptive use: an analysis of 172 countries. Retrieved from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)60478-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)60478-4/fulltext)

² Sonfield, et al. (2013). The social and economic benefits of women's ability to determine whether and when to have children. Retrieved from: https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/social-economic-benefits.pdf

³ Frost, Jennifer J., et al. (2014). "Return on investment: A fuller assessment of the benefits and cost savings of the US publicly funded family planning program." *The Milbank Quarterly*, 92(4), 667-720. [Online]. http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/MQ-Frost_1468-0009.12080.pdf

⁴ Marshall, LM. (2007). Variation in the incidence of uterine leiomyoma among premenopausal women by age and race. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9397113>



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Maine's family planning clinics are essential to Maine's public health infrastructure, and their continued health ensures the continued health of Maine's women, including those from our most vulnerable communities. And – it's worth remembering that every Mainer, not only female-identified people, can access these lifesaving services, and that every Mainer can benefit from access to STI prevention and planned pregnancy. While we represent Maine women, we know that women are supported when everyone can access this care.

However, continuing to participate in Title X funding while federal 'gag rules' are in place would also harm Maine women. New regulations at the national level interrupt the right to private counsel between a patient and their healthcare provider, and that is unacceptable. Maine must step up to ensure that access to these lifesaving services is assured.

Please support Maine's women by voting 'yes' on LD 1613.

Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director
Maine Women's Lobby / mainewomen.org