



# Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish

Maine Women's Lobby

In support of LD 820

An Act To Prevent Discrimination in Public and Private Insurance Coverage for Pregnant Women in  
Maine

March 27, 2019

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services: my name is Whitney Parrish, and I am Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am pleased to speak to you today in strong support of LD 820, *An Act to Prevent Discrimination in Public and Private Insurance Coverage for Pregnant Women in Maine*.

For over forty years, our organization has focused on four key policy areas: freedom from violence, freedom from discrimination, access to health care, and the overarching issue that informs the others: economic security. We believe that LD 820 touches upon each of these issues and would materially improve the lives and economic security of all people who can become pregnant in Maine.

According to 2017 polling data (with the sample representative of the 2016 electorate demographically and politically, including of the 2016 presidential vote), there is a near universal, fundamental belief that in the United States, everyone should be able to live, work, and make decisions about their health with dignity and economic security.<sup>i</sup> Importantly, data shows that three in four (73%) of voters see abortion coverage and economic justice issues as critical to women's and families' ability to be healthy and live with dignity.<sup>ii</sup> Eighty-five percent (85%) of voters believe that a woman who can make decisions about her own reproductive health care, including whether and when to have children, has more control over her own economic security.<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> *New polling shows voters see the impact of abortion coverage on women's economic opportunities and security*. Hart Research Associates. 2017. Accessed at <https://allaboveall.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Economic-Opportunity-and-Reproductive-Health-Polling-Memo-October-2017.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*

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As costs of basic needs, health care and child care skyrocket, it is of the highest importance that people who can become pregnant are able to control their own decisions about when, if, and how they start a family. When we allow people to make their own decisions about their own health, they are more likely to attain job security, be able to financially support their families, and lift themselves up and out of poverty.<sup>iv</sup> Additionally, the type of insurance coverage a person has should not dictate whether they are able to obtain a medical procedure. A person struggling to make ends meet should not have to make the decision about whether to end their pregnancy based on how they get their health coverage or how much money they have – their decision should be based on what is best for them and their family's circumstances.

The economic security of Maine women and families is intrinsically tied to policies that lower barriers to health care, and LD 820 is the path forward toward making sure that pregnant people have full access to the care that they potentially need. We strongly urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 820. Thank you for your time.

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<sup>iv</sup> *Socioeconomic consequences of abortion compared to unwanted birth*. American Public Health Association. 2012. Accessed at <https://apha.confex.com/apha/140am/webprogram/Paper263858.html>

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