

**Testimony of Whitney Parrish**  
**Maine Women's Lobby**  
**In support of LD 1**  
**An Act to Protect Health Care Coverage for Maine Families**  
**January 29, 2019**

Good afternoon, Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Coverage, I am Whitney Parrish, Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby, and I am pleased to speak to you today in support of LD 1, *An Act to Protect Health Care Coverage for Maine Families*.

For 40 years, the Maine Women's Lobby has advocated on behalf of Maine's 678,000 women and girls, focusing on freedom from violence, freedom from discrimination, access to health care and the issue that affects all others, economic security.

As you have heard throughout this afternoon, passing this legislation will allow Maine to join other states in codifying patient protections under the Affordable Care Act into state law; these protections impact women and female-identified people tremendously in their ability to access adequate and affordable health care. Studies<sup>1</sup> on the impact of the Affordable Care Act to women have shown that women ages 19 to 64 who delay or forego needed care fell to an all-time low in 2016 compared to 2010. This is due in large part to being able to attain affordable health care insurance, as well as protection from discrimination for pre-existing conditions. Women can have myriad pre-existing conditions that are not experienced by their male counterparts, such as conditions related to the reproductive system, breast cancer, a higher prevalence of osteoporosis, disproportionate health impacts of gender-based violence, and so on. Protections for people with pre-existing conditions are crucial to equitable and fair health care and crucial to a thriving Maine for all.

Insured women are more likely to access preventive screenings like mammograms and pap tests than non-insured women, if only because accessing these lifesaving tests can mean not feeding or clothing one's child. Additionally, it costs money to take time off from work, let alone money to spend on a visit to the doctor or hospital. Providing evidence-based preventive care for annual mammograms, well woman visits, birth control, and breast-feeding support lessens the burdens not only on patients, but also on the health care and medical systems. Passing LD 1 will further help ensure access to nondiscriminatory, timely and necessary medical treatment for individuals who might not otherwise have access to it.

We owe to it all Mainers, especially those who have been historically and disproportionately impacted by lack of parity and equity in the health care system, to ensure access to health care where women and female-identified people are treated the same as their male counterparts. We owe full coverage despite a person's sexual or gender identity and the potential intersections of their identity, including race and age. We need to make sure that our most vulnerable Mainers living with pre-existing conditions are cared for. LD 1 will ensure that we begin to close disparities in health care coverage in Maine and make it truly accessible to everyone, creating a more thriving and inviting place now and into the future.

We urge you to vote ought to pass. Thank you for your time.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Z. Gunja, S. R. Collins, M. M. Doty, and S. Beutel, *How the Affordable Care Act Has Helped Women Gain Insurance and Improved Their Ability to Get Health Care*, The Commonwealth Fund, August 2017.