

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nicole Clegg and I serve as the Acting CEO at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and I am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 1040

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to more than 14,000 people in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford and Topsham. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, abortion care as well as a variety of primary care services and gender-affirming care. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$4 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to get affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality. As a part of this vision, we not only strongly support coverage for gender-affirming care (GAC), we are also a trusted provider of said care, providing treatment for over 600 patients across nearly 1350 visits in FY 2022.

In 2019, Governor Mills removed pre-existing exclusions to Gender-Affirming Care from the MaineCare program, working with both transgender advocacy organizations and professionals in the medical community to bring MaineCare's policies into compliance with both state and federal law by extending coverage for Gender-Affirming care. This extension, which went into effect in the Fall of 2019, covers a broad array of services from gender-affirming counseling to hormone replacement to surgery and marks Maine as among the nation's leaders in the coverage of Gender-Affirming Care<sup>1</sup> LD 1040 secures the Governor's extension of MaineCare coverage for Gender-Affirming care, writing it into statute and in doing so safe-guards access to vitally needed services for hundreds if not thousands<sup>2</sup> Mainers who may otherwise struggle access the care they need.

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<sup>1</sup> Ivette Gomez, Usha Ranji, Alina Salganifcoff, Lindsey Dawson, Carrie Rosenzweig, Rebecca Kellenberg, and Kathy Gifford, "Update on Medicaid Coverage of Gender-Affirming Health Services", *Kaiser Family Foundation*, October 11, 2022, <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/update-on-medicaid-coverage-of-gender-affirming-health-services/>

<sup>2</sup> Christy Mallory and Will Tentindo, "Medicaid Coverage for Gender-Affirming Care", *UCLA School of Law: Williams Institute*, December 2022, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Medicaid-Gender-Care-Dec-2022.pdf>

For the past decade, we have expanded our care to include transcare to better meet the needs of our patients, and we established a charitable fund to help patients without insurance or unable to pay out-of-pocket for the care to ensure that access to care was universal, regardless of ability to pay. Since the state's action to guarantee MaineCare coverage, we've seen a roughly 66% decline in the percentage of GAC visits needing access to this Transcare assistance fund. This decline occurred at the same time as we experienced nearly a 75% increase in total visits for GAC services. This trend would suggest that the inclusion of Gender-Affirming in Mainecare coverage provides a significant – and growing– number of Mainers access to care that they need for their physical and mental well-being which they may not have any other means of accessing.

While the data is compelling, the numbers do not fully capture the human impact of coverage. Here's the response from one of our patients:

*"I'm starting my first Testosterone injection today. The HRT process has felt like it was going to be logistically impossible, from limited access to healthcare to society's struggle accepting and validating non-binary trans identities. My visit to Planned Parenthood has dispelled some of my anxieties around getting medical help and has empowered me to make this needed change in my life. They even recommended me to a psychiatrist and counselor - resources I've been struggling to find. I'm grateful Planned Parenthood is available to offer sex positive and gender affirming healthcare in a society that often shames sex, sexuality and body rights."*

LD 1040 represents a milestone opportunity to ensure access to vitally needed health care services for all Mainer regardless of gender expression or identity. This is a chance to write into law a policy, which over the past three and half years has helped hundreds if not thousands of Mainers live fuller, more rewarding lives in which they can truly be themselves. For all of these reasons I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1040.