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Maine Family Planning
Testimony in Support of
LD 535, An Act to Increase Access to Necessary Medical Care for Certain Minors
May 15, 2023

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, Maine Family Planning is submitting testimony in support of LD 535, An Act to Increase Access to Necessary Medical Care for Certain Minors.

Maine Family Planning provides full scope sexual and reproductive health care at 18 locations throughout the state and provides pass-through funding for family planning services to 43 sub-grantee sites including federally qualified health centers and school-based health centers. We have been providing gender-affirming hormone therapy since 2012, starting with one site in Lewiston, and now offered at nine of our clinics and via telehealth.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Population Affairs defines gender-affirming care as "a supportive form of healthcare. It consists of an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people. For transgender and nonbinary children and adolescents, early gender-affirming care is crucial to overall health and well-being as it allows the child or adolescent to focus on social transitions and can increase their confidence while navigating the healthcare system."ⁱ

In 2022, a peer-reviewed study was published in *PLOS One*, drawing from the largest survey of transgender adults in the United States, the U.S. Transgender Survey. This study, "Access to gender-affirming hormones during adolescence and mental health outcomes among transgender adults,"ⁱⁱ found that transgender people who began hormone treatment in adolescence had fewer thoughts of suicide, were less likely to experience major mental health disorders, and had fewer problems with substance abuse than those who started hormones in adulthood.ⁱⁱⁱ

Andrew Smith, a young adult fiction author, is credited with the quote, "People fear what they don't understand and hate what they can't conquer." This feels incredibly germane to the topic of transgender rights. Transgender people are estimated to represent between 0.5% and 1.5% of the population in the United States^{iv} and they are estimated to experience violent victimization (rape, sexual assault, aggravated / simple assault) at four times the rate of cisgender (people who identify with the sex they were assigned at birth) people.^v For the last several years, each year has broken the previous year's record for the number of anti-trans bills introduced nationwide. Trans existence is not some kind of growing threat to our children that we need to protect them from. Trans people have always existed. And we can choose whether we face that fact with curiosity and compassion, or fear and domination. As one of the largest providers of gender-affirming hormone therapy in our state, we implore the committee to choose the former, vote ought to pass on LD 535, and stand with trans Mainers, not against them.

ⁱ [Gender-Affirming Care and Young People \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.hhs.gov/gender-affirming-care-and-young-people/)

ⁱⁱ [Access to gender-affirming hormones during adolescence and mental health outcomes among transgender adults | PLOS ONE](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.plosone.0241111)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Better mental health found among transgender people who started hormones as teens | News Center | Stanford Medicine](https://www.stanfordmedicine.stanford.edu/news/center-for-transgender-health/better-mental-health-found-among-transgender-people-who-started-hormones-as-teens-2022-06-15)

^{iv} [Trans-Pop-Update-Jun-2022.pdf \(ucla.edu\)](https://www.transpopupdate.org/jun-2022.pdf)

^v [Transgender people over four times more likely than cisgender people to be victims of violent crime - Williams Institute \(ucla.edu\)](https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/transgender-people-over-four-times-more-likely-than-cisgender-people-to-be-victims-of-violent-crime/)