



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Testimony of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese in opposition to LD 143

An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 143. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 48 parishes, it has nine elementary schools, one private elementary school, one diocesan high school and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish. Within the diocese, there are also seven subsidized housing units, four rehabilitation and residence facilities, and two child-care centers. There are three Catholic hospitals operating independently of the diocese as well as Catholic Charities Maine, the state's largest social service agency, which operates as a separate corporation.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland advocates for enacting and enforcing laws that create safe communities and promote the common good. This issue is important to Catholics because as people of faith a primary concern is the moral and ethical considerations that should be at the root of our decision making. We all are created in God's image. We all—each of us--possess a basic human dignity. The Catholic Church teaches that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the underpinning of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundational principle of Catholic social teaching.

Catholics have considered universal health care a basic human right since the earliest of times. Jesus' ministry to the sick, injured and marginalized is foundational to our vocation of healing and establishing moral societies where all people are cared for. Christians understand their vocation not only to provide direct care to the sick and injured, but to advocate on their behalf to those responsible for the common good of society. Almost 100 years ago, the Catholic Bishops of the United States called for basic health care for all people and have consistently advocated for this ever since. The important thing to note about this unwavering support is that health care must be life-affirming, not life ending.

This funding would support abortion. It is also fiscally irresponsible. In a time of large budget deficits, money should not be used for this. It is unnecessary. We already have 131 federal qualified health care centers in Maine. ¹ Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in Maine offer a comprehensive range of primary care and preventive services to underserved populations. These services typically include women's health.

We are told that federal taxpayer money does not go to abortion. This is impossible, because money is fungible.

¹ <https://carelistings.com/find/federally-qualified-health-centers/maine>

The nation's largest abortion provider, Planned Parenthood receives significant taxpayer funding through various government sources. According to recent reports, the organization received approximately \$670.4 million in government grants, contracts, and Medicaid reimbursements in the 2021-2022 fiscal year.² This amounts to almost \$1.9 million per day in taxpayer funding.

The majority of this funding comes from two main sources:

1. Medicaid reimbursements: This makes up the largest portion of government funding for Planned Parenthood. In fiscal year 2014-2015, it was estimated that Planned Parenthood received about \$390 million in federal and state Medicaid reimbursements.³
2. Title X Family Planning Program: Planned Parenthood also receives funding through this federal program. In fiscal year 2014-2015, the organization spent \$57.28 million in grant money from the Title X program

REMEMBER: [Six in ten Americans](#) oppose taxpayer funding of abortion.⁴

Forcing taxpayers to fund abortions they find abhorrent imposes the abortion industry's views on all of us. Many abortion advocates now admit that abortion is the taking of a human life – yet they would force those who oppose killing of the innocent to promote what even *they* admit is killing.⁵ Nothing could be more intolerant.

I urge you to vote ought to not to pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/

² [Fact Sheet: Planned Parenthood's 2021-22 Annual Report - Lozier Institute](#)

³ [How much government money does Planned Parenthood receive? | USAFacts](#)

⁴ Marist Poll, 2018. <https://www.kofc.org/un/en/resources/communications/abortion-limits-favored.pdf>

⁵ See M.E. Williams, "So what if abortion ends life?", *Salon*, Jan. 23, 2013, http://www.salon.com/2013/01/23/so_what_if_abortion_ends_life/; J. Schaeffer, "Abortion Provider: We Should Admit 'It's Violence, It's a Person, It's Killing'," *Newsmax*, Nov. 2, 2015, <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/abortion-providers-violence-killing/2015/11/02/id/700238/>.