

DATE: March 10, 2025

TO: The Honorable Henry Ingwersen & The Honorable Michele Meyer, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: LD 143: An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and all members of the committee,

My name is Caroline Marsden. I am a resident of Gorham, a mother, and a churchgoing member of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN). I am writing today in support of LD 143.

Family planning services are critical for women, couples, and families of every size to stay healthy and thriving. Throughout my life I have needed safe, affordable, and convenient reproductive health access for a number of reasons, and to go without it would have put my life on a much different trajectory.

For a decade I used a birth control pill both to avoid unplanned pregnancy and to help manage painful PMS symptoms. As part of my routine care, in my early 20s I had an abnormal pap smear that required a colposcopy and biopsy. This was caught early, so the biopsy was sufficient to remove any areas of concern. I will never know if, left undetected, that might have grown into cancer. I would not have gone out of my way for a pap smear at that stage of life, so having routine access to gynecological care potentially prevented a life threatening issue.

Years later, my husband and I decided to take "next steps" with our lives. Through careful planning and saving we were able to buy a house in Gorham in late 2020. Despite being in the Portland area, the *only* medical appointment I could get within months of moving was a family planning appointment. As a healthy young person, PCP access was secondary compared to maintaining my birth control until we were ready, and then when ready, to safely get pregnant. Waiting until then meant we both had established successful careers and a lovely home and community. I'm grateful then for the excellent care we received through my conception and pregnancy journey, amid some complications, as it resulted in our beloved, healthy daughter (now 2 years old).

Post pregnancy of course it is critical to get access again to safe and effective birth control methods, for the health of the mother as well as any future children. Once again, access to these services helped me navigate an unexpectedly tricky health landscape. I first had an IUD inserted, but that resulted in some complications which necessitated we remove it only a few months later. From there I went back to my "safe" birth control pill, which had worked well for a decade pre-pregnancy, but post-pregnancy bodies are different! Over time that caused some serious new health concerns including unsafe migraines. Yet again I needed to adjust my birth control method under the care of my doctor.

Having safe and accessible family planning and reproductive health care access supports families like mine to be healthy, at the size we want, with children we can provide for and dote on. I hope every family in the state maintains access to the services I've been grateful to receive.

Thank you for considering my testimony.