

ashley smith  
belgrade  
LD 143

Hello, My name is Ashley Smith and I am a resident of Belgrade Maine, present this morning in support of LD 143.

I'm here because these non-profit clinics are my only source of healthcare. I do not qualify for health insurance through my employers. I cannot afford to pay for the insurance marketplace premiums. I also do not qualify for the sliding scale payment options these facilities offer. I pay out of pocket for all of my healthcare needs.

Maine Family Planning in Augusta is my Primary Care Physician. In the last four years I've received care there, not once did I have an abortion. I have however, had access to STD/STI testing, thyroid testing, blood panels, Pap smears, breast examinations, referrals for mammograms, a Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder diagnosis. The last two saved my life. Not only was I able to find a space and practitioner that felt safe enough to advocate for myself, they took my concerns seriously and they provided me care that would not otherwise be accessible to me.

I do not want to die to a cancer I could beat because you've decided to defund my only resource of preventative care. I lost my maternal grandmother to her second fight with breast cancer when she was 60 years old. I'm 35. Am I more than halfway through my life? If the funding isn't provided, we'll lose the keystone to not only my health & well-being, but to all of the people in our communities.

Threatening to defund these healthcare clinics would mean even less providers will be available in Maine. Several have already closed or announced plans to close, including Waldo Hospital, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center & Northern Light Health. On the 1st of April, Waldo Hospital in Belfast will stop offering inpatient labor and delivery services. St. Mary's in Lewiston has already closed its maternal units and is finalizing the closure of its intensive care unit as I construct this email. And surely, you must know that Central Maine Healthcare and their three hospitals were purchased by a California-based non-profit after enduring financial strains for years. You're closing the doors to facilities that provide significantly more care other than abortions.

To close, I just want to thank everyone for being here today. It was an honor to participate in support of LD 143.