



Maine Equal Justice
People Policy Solutions

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MEJ Testimony *in support of* LD 143, An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services

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Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Kathy Kilrain del Rio, I use she/her pronouns, and I'm the Advocacy and Programs Director for Maine Equal Justice, a nonprofit legal aid provider working to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity for people in Maine.

Access to the health care provided by family planning services providers is essential to the health and financial security of Mainers across our state. The health care centers that would receive funding from this legislation provide critical access to a wide range of necessary care to 31,000 patients annually, with nearly 22,000 of those patients having low incomes. While Maine has taken significant steps to improve health care coverage for low-income people, these health care centers are often the easiest place to access care for a variety of reasons, including a lack of providers in many regions of the state, transportation challenges, and the need for a safe and welcoming provider for many types of care.

The ability to control when to have a child is fundamental to low-income people and families' financial security. These health centers provide needed education about the best contraception options for an individual's unique needs. This is also true of access to information about and protection from STDs, which are on the rise. Gender affirming care is often difficult for people with low incomes to access, and these providers are essential for many people to access affirming care that is safe and respectful.

In addition to the services already mentioned, these health centers provide many other types of care that meet the full range of health needs many people should access each year. These include routine gynecological screenings, primary care, cancer screenings, behavioral services, and vaccinations. For many Mainers with low incomes, these basic health care needs would not be met without access to the health care centers seeking funding today. That people can access these important types of services results in lower costs for our state because preventive care and reproductive health care avoid more costly health issues.

With the current politics in D.C. where reproductive and gender-affirming health care providers are under attack, and with the many unknowns about potential cuts to Medicaid, it is more important than ever for Maine to ensure that people across the state can access the critical

health care services provided by these health care centers. For these reasons and the others you have heard today, we urge you to support LD 143. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.