

Aspen Ruhlin
Community Engagement Manager
Mabel Wadsworth Center
Bangor, ME

Public Testimony

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

My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Mabel Wadsworth Center. First, I would like to thank the Chairs Senator Ingwersen and Representative Meyer, along with the rest of the members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Mabel Wadsworth Center is an independent feminist sexual and reproductive health center located in Bangor, and we have been providing care to our community since 1984. We are honored to provide a range of services that include abortion care, prenatal care, STI testing and treatment, contraception, gender-affirming hormone therapy, vasectomies, primary care, and more.

Mabel Wadsworth Center is an independent clinic. This means that we neither seek nor receive any government funding, whether that is state or federal. Because of this, the funding laid out in this bill is a resource that our clinic will never see. That does not make this funding any less essential; in fact, it only highlights the necessity even more. It is no secret that funding for family planning services is under threat and that healthcare access for women and transgender people is being targeted. Mabel Wadsworth Center is one small clinic with a staff numbering just over a dozen—the healthcare providers that would receive this funding both employ and serve a huge number of Mainers in every corner of our state, making funding such as this incredibly important.

The care that this funding would go towards is essential, and covers things like STI testing and treatment, cancer screenings, preventative care, and more. There is no arguing that these services benefit the health of Mainers, both on an individual level and from the perspective of public health.

To speak from a personal perspective for a moment—many years ago, my mother had a precancerous spot removed from her cervix that was caught during her regular pap smear. She was lucky to have a job that provided insurance that

allowed her to see a trusted provider for that regular preventative care. Had she not had that, there is a chance she wouldn't be here today. Family planning funding covers this care and assures that all Mainers, regardless of income, can access the services that allow them to live long, healthy lives.

Caring for our neighbors is a Maine value, whether that's lending a hand with shoveling or making sure everyone has access to the care they need. As elected officials, it is the responsibility of legislators to use their position to embody Maine values and facilitate access to care for all Mainers. Because of this, Mabel Wadsworth Center urges you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 143. Thank you.