



Post Office Box 587
Augusta, ME 04332-0587

t: 207.622.7524

f: 207.622.0836

Testimony in support:

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

Health and Human Services Committee

March 10, 2025

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the committee. My name is George Hill and I'm President and CEO of Maine Family Planning. I'm here today to testify in support of LD 143, "An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services."

I have been CEO of Maine Family Planning since 1991, when we had a staff of just seven. Today we operate 19 sites across Maine and are the grants manager for the entire family planning network.

Maine's commitment to family planning was quite strong in the 1990s and aught years; our state used to have one of the best ratios of state funding versus federal funding in the country. However, state funding has been flatlined for the last decade.

Meanwhile, with the erosion of maternity, reproductive and primary health care; the ongoing threats to family planning care; and the STI rates skyrocketing in Maine, providers and patients want to know why we are not prioritizing their health care access when making budget decisions.

Health care costs are rising, the demand for care is increasing, yet we are not responsibly setting priorities that make sure Mainers' basic health care needs are met. We're talking about wellness exams, pap smears, STI testing, breast and cervical cancer screenings. This is important preventive care for patients, 70% of whom qualify for free or reduced-rate care.

Now is NOT the time to shortchange sexual and reproductive healthcare funding, when, for example, we're facing surging rates of syphilis in Maine. In response, the CDC is recommending all who are sexually active in three counties get tested for syphilis. (Penobscot, Franklin and Aroostook)

Maine Family Planning is the only health clinic in two of those three counties that is providing this type of care. A young adult who can't get into our health center the limited days we're open for STI testing, will go without care and face lifelong health effects. We're also seeing for the first time in decades, babies born with congenital syphilis, which suggests undetected infections in adults.

Our patients are regularly effusive with praise for the quality of care they receive at our clinics. For

many of them, we are the only health provider they see all year. We make sure they feel seen, supported and cared for. But we can't continue to provide this care without funding increases that reflect the reality of our current landscape.

Maine's family planning network is extremely strong and resilient, just like Mainers themselves. But after a decade of flat funding from the state, we're in dire straits. Let's not make a bad situation worse. With an infusion of funding into Maine's family planning program, outlined in LD 143, we can serve more patients and improve the health of our state. An ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure.

Thank you for your time. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD143.

George A. Hill, President/CEO