



HEALTHREACH
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Contact: **Ed Molleo**, Communications Director
Tele: (207) 660 - 9913

PR@HealthReach.org

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HealthReach supports LD 143.

Family planning services are crucial to the health and wellbeing of our patients and communities, particularly in rural Maine.

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, & Financial Services – my name is Ed Molleo, and I serve as the Director of Communications for HealthReach Community Health Centers. HealthReach provides primary care services across a broad swath of rural Central and Western Maine: in Albion, Belgrade, Bethel, Bingham, Fairfield, Kingfield, Livermore Falls, Lovejoy, Madison, Rangeley, Richmond, Strong, and the village of Coopers Mills within Whitefield. Alongside Maine’s other community health centers, we together compose *the largest independent primary care network in the state* – 1 in 5 Mainers visit their local community health center for affordable, accessible, high-quality healthcare.

HealthReach strongly supports LD 143, “An Act to Improve Women’s Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services”. We thank the bill sponsors for bringing this important legislation forward.

HealthReach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit network of 12 Community Health Centers (CHCs). Our 275 staff annually serve 26,000 patients across 100,000 visits through primary and preventative healthcare, including behavioral health and dental services. Our locations are situated in otherwise medically underserved communities. We serve patients that come from 9 of Maine’s 16 counties, and our Connector and Substance Use Disorder programs serve Mainers statewide. As members of the same communities we serve, we are acutely aware that our services have stood as a lifeline for rural Mainers for 50 years – since 1975 and through today.

The bill before you will help Maine continue family planning across its population, particularly in its rural and under-resourced communities. Over the past decade, we have seen general family planning services often questioned, and funding for these services is continually at risk. HealthReach partners closely with Maine Family Planning to provide health education and other interventions that help our patients live happy, healthy

lives with their families. HealthReach does not provide abortion services, but rather educates around sexually transmitted infections (STIs), birth control options, and related information, as well as providing STI treatment and prevention resources.

Maine Family Planning has extended their reach beyond the larger service centers in Central and Northern Maine by partnering with organizations like HealthReach to deliver affordable reproductive healthcare services that include contraception, STI testing and treatment, and HIV prophylaxis. Some of our most financially disadvantaged patients can receive free contraceptive medications because of the partnership between Maine Family Planning and HealthReach. By preventing unintended pregnancies, family planning can reduce healthcare costs and economic strains on families. Family planning services contribute to better health outcomes by reducing the spread of STIs and ensuring healthier pregnancies. Our health system's ongoing partnership with Maine Family Planning – for more than 15 years – has meant that HealthReach has received long-term technical assistance and training, ensuring high-quality reproductive healthcare results.

HealthReach continually troubleshoots barriers to positive health outcomes – and we have heard of Mainers traveling from 45 minutes to 2 hours one-way to visit service centers for similar family planning services. Patients with a vehicle, time, and money can seek out needed healthcare services at their preference, but unfortunately many Mainers simply forego needed medical care when the barriers to their access are so high. Skipping reproductive healthcare can easily lead to poor health outcomes.

This bill, supporting the provision of family planning services, will help ALL Maine patients get the care they need close to home. Please support us in our mission to continue to deliver urgently needed healthcare to the people of Maine through LD 143.

On behalf of HealthReach and our 26,000 patients, I thank you for your consideration of this important bill and our testimony. This bill will allow us to continue serving Maine in the way that all Mainers deserve. Please choose to support rural Maine residents with this bill.

Edward Molleo

Director of Communications

HealthReach Community Health Centers