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Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 865, An Act to Require MaineCare to Reimburse for Lactation Services in the Homes of Eligible Persons

Committee on Health and Human Services

March 18th, 2025

Good Afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP) in strong support of LD 865, which would require MaineCare to reimburse for lactation services in the homes of eligible persons. As an organization dedicated to the health and well-being of Maine's children, we urge you to pass this important legislation.

Breastfeeding provides well-documented health benefits for both infants and breastfeeding parents. It reduces the risk of respiratory diseases, obesity, diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in infants, while also lowering the risk of hypertension, and breast, ovarian, and endometrial cancers in breastfeeding parents (1). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding alongside complementary foods for at least one year. However, many families face significant challenges in initiating and sustaining breastfeeding, particularly those who experience socio-economic barriers or lack access to lactation support.

As pediatricians, our members regularly see new parents struggle with latch difficulties, low milk supply, pain, and concerns about infant weight gain. These issues, if left unaddressed, can lead to early cessation of breastfeeding, despite the parents' desire to continue. Access to high-quality lactation support can make a crucial difference. Home-based lactation care removes transportation barriers, enhances support in a comfortable environment, and allows lactation consultants to meet the specific needs of families. Access to these home-based services is especially important in rural areas where hospital- or clinic-based lactation services may otherwise be unavailable.

Unfortunately, current MaineCare policies do not guarantee reimbursement for home-based lactation services, leaving many of our most vulnerable families in Maine without the support they need. This disproportionately affects rural families and low-income parents. LD 865 addresses this gap by ensuring that MaineCare covers in-home lactation services, providing equitable access to evidence-based care that promotes breastfeeding success.

By passing LD 865, Maine would be investing in the long-term health of its children while also reducing healthcare costs associated with preventable conditions. Increased breastfeeding rates lead to fewer infections, reduced hospitalizations, and lower rates of chronic disease (2). These outcomes will not only benefit infants, families and healthcare providers, but Maine as a whole.

The Maine AAP urges the committee to vote 'Ought to Pass' on LD 865 and ensure that all Maine families have access to the essential lactation services they need. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Madeleine DesFosses

Advocacy and Public Health Manager, Maine AAP

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References

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2. Office of the Surgeon General (US); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US); Office on Women's Health (US). The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding. Rockville (MD): Office of the Surgeon General (US); 2011. Barriers to Breastfeeding in the United States.