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Testimony for:

LD 1079, An Act to Provide Comprehensive Perimenopause and Menopause Education

My name is Susan Kamin. I am a certified nurse midwife and live and work in Brunswick, Maine. I am writing in support of LD 1079, An Act to Provide Comprehensive Perimenopause and Menopause education.

I have worked in the health care field specializing in women's health since 1986. I studied nursing, then furthered my education to become a Nurse Practitioner, and finally a Certified Nurse Midwife. I also earned a Master's degree in Public Health. During all of my training, I received very little, if any, education on menopause health. I was called to midwifery from a strong desire and commitment to provide equitable and accessible safe maternity and reproductive care to female identified people. I was focused on care of people during the reproductive phase of their lives, so I did not recognize the impact of my lack of training in older women's health. It was not until I went through menopause myself that I realized these implications. I experienced many chronic health issues during this time and was treated with useless and unnecessary medications and procedures. I do not know how much perimenopause or menopause were the source of my health care issues since no health care provider suggested this as a cause. Despite working in hospital and other clinical settings among many female professionals, I did not have the language, knowledge, or tools to know how to advocate for my own health needs from a menopause context.

Approximately eight years ago, recognizing the gap in menopause health services, and wanting to meet my patient's needs, I pivoted my focus from pregnancy related care to hormone, menopause and sexual health. I started an independent practice called Lifecycle Women's Health. During that time I have seen hundreds of people who have felt dismissed or were misinformed by their well-intentioned providers and the health care system. Patients have told me:

- *My doctor says menopause is normal and there is nothing to do about it.*
- *Even though I have symptoms, I was told to suck it up.*
- *Hormone therapy causes cancer and strokes.*
- *My doctor thinks I just need antidepressants or ADHD medications.*
- *My doctor has the same struggles, so she knows how hard it is and wishes me the best.*

Menopause is an inevitable and universal biological process that every person born with ovaries will experience. Some people proceed through the transition to menopause, or perimenopause, without many issues. However the majority of people experience distressing symptoms, and more than a few have debilitating health issues which can lead to loss of employment and relationships, as well as chronic health issues that could have been prevented if menopause care was recognized as an entity. Educating the public as well as health care providers on menopause will not only improve health outcomes, but it

will have an economic impact as well. It will support individual's productivity and lower overall health care costs by providing preventative health care options.

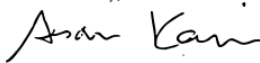
Menopause care involves explaining the physiology of the process, symptom relief, prevention of chronic health conditions, and options for treatment and lifestyle support. During the menopause transition, the ovaries stop producing estrogen and progesterone, which affects every cell and body function. As a result, many people experience total body changes including hot flashes and night sweats, brain fog, anxiety, skin changes, insomnia, joint pain, urinary symptoms, as well as a multitude of other troublesome health concerns.

When menopause finally occurs, which is defined as 12 months with no menstrual period, people often begin to feel a little better, but the depletion of hormones coupled with the lack of knowledge on self-care and evidenced based medical options can lead to serious, preventable health problems such as coronary artery disease, osteoporosis, dementia, and genitourinary symptoms of menopause. Cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death of women, and more women die each year from heart disease than men do. Many health care providers and patients are not aware of this information.

I feel honored to have the opportunity to work with people during perimenopause and menopause and have felt for the first time in my long career that I am helping people really feel well. Many people have told me they feel they have their lives back, and they finally feel like themselves again. People are eating and sleeping better, moving more, and lowering their cholesterol levels. However, I also feel very frustrated that despite menopause being a universal event, resources and information about menopause is not mainstreamed just as other normal life phases are. Failure to inform and educate people about menopause will have a huge health and economic impact. I truly hope that you will pass this bill.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Susan Kamin

References:

<https://menopause.org/wp-content/uploads/workplace/2024-Menopause-and-the-Workplace-Consensus-Recommendations.pdf>

<https://menopause.org/wp-content/uploads/for-women/MenoNote-Menopause-and-the-Workplace.pdf>