

April 1, 2025

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Melissa Collard, MD. I am an OB/GYN practicing at MaineHealth Brunswick Campus.

I am writing in support of LD 1079, An Act to Provide Comprehensive Perimenopause and Menopause Education. I have been providing OB/GYN care in Maine for 19 years. Perimenopause and menopause are the longest periods of time during a woman's/person who menstruates life. This is longer than the reproductive years or pregnancy, yet education for not only patients but healthcare providers is lacking. Much of what I have learned has come from outside of medical school and residency. However, much of my days are filled with patients with real concerns and questions about what they are experiencing.

Perimenopause and menopause are hot topics. There is a lot of information on the internet and much of it is inaccurate and aims to push untested treatments or costly supplements. Some of these can have significant side effects or cause harm.

There is a lot of support and educational materials for pregnancy, but there is limited resources for perimenopause or menopause. There needs to be up to date, evidenced based information to allow women/people who menstruate to understand the significant changes happening to their physical and mental health and what legitimate treatments are out there.

As an OB/GYN who started training during the time of the WHI (Women's Health Initiative) where women/persons who menstruate were suddenly taken of hormone therapy and now in a time when the pendulum is swinging the other way and finding the benefits of certain hormones on heart, bone, brain function, this information should be available there for all to learn and benefit. It is vital to know what is happening, why it is happening and all available treatment options including hormones, non-hormonal treatments and support. There are other factors taking place during this time of hormonal changes such as life events, divorce, loss of parents, children going off to college, etc. and that can cause other effects such as absent days from work, difficulty concentrating, memory impairment, difficulty with work relationships that can have a negative impact on employers as well as the woman/person who menstruates.

Community based health programs, education to providers, patients, written information (in multiple languages) along with outreach into communities where women's health services are becoming deserts is vital to 50% of the population of Maine.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Melissa Collard, MD FACOG