

Marsha Siviski
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LD 217

I am in strong support of LD 217, An Act to Require Schools to Provide Access to Free Condoms for Students in Grades 9 to 12 in the School Nurse's Office. As a speech-language pathologist with nearly 25 years of experience working with high risk adolescents, I have witnessed directly the complexities of adolescents navigating sexual and reproductive health information and decision-making.

Too often, adolescents make impulsive, ill-informed decisions that have long ranging consequences, including unintended pregnancies or STI transmission. The impact of either can be devastating.

Access to free condoms mitigates these risks. The best data we have from the latest Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey tells us that 52.5% of Maine students are sexually active by Grade 12, and of sexually active students, only around half used a condom during their last sexual encounter (MIYHS). This makes it easy to understand why half of reported cases of STIs occur in adolescent and young adult populations (AAP). For more than a decade, the American Academy of Pediatrics has publicly supported condom access programs in school and community settings, to address this public health need.

I support LD 217, and also request that committee members amend the bill to make it more equitable and impactful by changing the language to say that condoms can be accessed in the school nurse's office "or locations authorized by the school nurse."

Maine's young people deserve healthy starts to their sexual and reproductive lives, with all the tools at their disposal to protect themselves and their peers. I urge the Committee to vote YES on LD 217.

Respectfully,

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