

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Ava Hersom, and I am submitting testimony 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*. I am a student in grade 11 at Gardiner Area High School located in Gardiner, Maine.

I support LD 217 because:

- I want to be safe and feel comfortable to make my own decisions. When I choose to be sexually active, I want to be prepared and have the education and tools to know I am safe.
- Although I am learning to drive, I do not have my license and way to transport myself. Asking my mom and family and friends to drive me to get an item like condoms is awkward. Access to condoms that prevents STDs and pregnancy should be easier.
- When someone has access to contraceptives like condoms, it doesn't mean that person will use it. I have condoms that were given to me by another organization to help with access but I don't use them just because I have them. If and when I choose to use them is up to me and is not affected by the fact that I have them.

I 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."

I urge the Committee to vote YES on LD 217.

Thank you,
Ava Hersom