



Maine Medical Association



**TESTIMONY OF THE  
MAINE CHAPTER, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS,  
THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION,  
AND THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION**

**In SUPPORT of**

**LD 217, An Act to Require Schools to Provide Free access to Condoms for Students in  
Grades 9 to 12 in School Nurse's Office**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP), the Maine Medical Association (MMA), and Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA).

The Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and subspecialists across the state dedicated to improving the health and lives of children and adolescents in Maine. The MMA is a professional organization representing over 4,000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The MOA is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.

The Maine AAP, MMA, and MOA's legislative committees have joined to advocate with one voice in support of LD 217, which seeks to prevent and reduce unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among Maine high school students by providing free condoms for students.

STI rates are on the rise in Maine, and youth are being impacted. According to the CDC, since 2000, Maine's chlamydia rates have doubled, and since 2010, syphilis rates have more than doubled and gonorrhea rates have nearly quadrupled. In 2022, nearly half of the reported cases of chlamydia, syphilis, and gonorrhea were among 15-24 year olds (1). STIs will continue to spread among adolescents in Maine without public health interventions such as increased access to condoms.



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While often treatable, STIs commonly have no signs or symptoms. Adolescents may not know they have an STI, especially if they're not receiving routine STI testing through a healthcare provider. If not diagnosed and left untreated, some STIs can cause serious health impacts such as pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility. Preventing infection through barriers like condoms, is an effective way to avoid infections in the first place.

Access to free condoms can help prevent unintended pregnancies among adolescents, which can disrupt education and limit economic opportunities for young people. There is also evidence of increased health risks and complications during pregnancy and delivery for both pregnant adolescents and their newborns. Preventing unintended pregnancies among adolescents by providing access to condoms can help to avoid academic interruptions, economic challenges, and health risks in adolescence and beyond.

Adolescents face unique challenges in accessing condoms including social stigma, cost, transportation, lack of access to healthcare, and privacy concerns. Ensuring that all high school students have access to free condoms is essential to overcoming these barriers, allowing them to protect themselves and their sexual partners from STIs and unintended pregnancies that can have lasting impacts on their health, educational experiences, and lives. Providing access to condoms in school settings is an effective way to overcome common barriers to access, and is recommended by American Academy of Pediatrics (2).

To avoid unintentionally creating additional barriers to condom access, we request that committee members amend the bill language to say that condoms can be accessed in the school nurse's office "or locations authorized by the school nurse." This amendment would ensure that LD 217 has the intended impact, and truly benefits adolescents and public health.

Let's ensure Maine adolescents are able to make healthy and safe choices that protect their sexual and reproductive health, and that of their peers. We urge committee members to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 217, An Act to Require Schools to Provide Free Access to Condoms for Students in Grades 9 to 12 in the School Nurse's Office.

Madeleine DesFosses,  
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References:

1. [Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance Report 2022](#), U.S Center for Disease Control
2. COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE, Rebecca F. O'Brien, Lee Warner, Margaret J. Blythe, William P. Adelman, Cora C. Breuner, David A. Levine, Arik V. Marcell, Pamela J. Murray, Rebecca F. O'Brien; Condom Use by Adolescents. *Pediatrics* November 2013; 132 (5): 973–981. 10.1542/peds.2013-2821