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Public Testimony

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

My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Mabel Wadsworth Center. I would like to begin by thanking the Chairs Senator Rafferty and Representative Murphy, along with the rest of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Mabel Wadsworth Center is an independent feminist sexual and reproductive health center that has been providing care in Bangor since 1984. Our services include abortion care, prenatal care, STI testing/treatment, pap smears and other cancer screenings, gender-affirming hormone therapy, primary care, and more. As experts in providing sexual and reproductive healthcare, advocacy, and education, we at Mabel Wadsworth Center urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 217.

Condoms are an essential tool to reduce the risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies. They’re an effective method when used correctly, and they are the only contraception option that also prevents STI transmission. Research has found that condom availability does not impact when teens engage in sexual activity for the first time or if they engage in sexual activity at all. What condom availability does accomplish is providing those who are going to have sex with a method to protect their health. While condoms are available for purchase by teenagers, many lack the resources to either get to the store or pay for them.

By providing condoms for free in a school setting, we can easily improve the health of Maine teens. STI rates are on the rise across the board. While all STIs are either curable or manageable with medication, it is much less expensive to reduce rates by simply increasing access to condoms. While the health of



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individuals is an important factor in this, STI transmission is also a matter of public health.

While many adults are skittish at the thought of teens becoming sexually active, it is a reality that exists regardless of whether or not those teens have access to condoms to reduce their risk of STI transmission and unintended pregnancy. For the health of Maine teens, we urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 217. Thank you.