



Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Lisa Margulies, I serve as Vice President of Public Affairs, Maine, for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and I am here today to submit testimony in opposition to LD 1716.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care in approximately 10,000 visits per year in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford, and Topsham, as well as online via telehealth. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, behavioral health care, abortion care, gender-affirming care, as well as a variety of primary care services.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to access affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make, and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality. All people deserve to access comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion and gender-affirming care, free from shame, stigma, and intimidation. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$1.2 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine. For many, we are their only access to the health care system.

Accurate, comprehensive sex education is essential to ensure that young people can make informed, thoughtful choices about their sexual and reproductive health. Comprehensive sex education programs are associated with decreased rates of sexually transmitted infections and adolescent pregnancy, as well as less risky sexual behavior.ⁱ

Unfortunately, this bill advances policy that is misaligned with evidence-based sex education. The National Sex Education Standards do not suggest using an ultrasound video in the classroom, and experts in child development and sex education agree that this is not practice.ⁱⁱ Furthermore, requirements to show materials related to fetal development without critical context about reproductive health are misleading and potentially dangerous.

The bill language is strikingly similar to bills being pursued in state legislatures throughout the country, including Arkansas, Iowa, Florida, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Tennessee, all of which are consistent with a national extremist political agenda to

advance anti-abortion goals.ⁱⁱⁱ Some similar legislation explicitly names one video, “Meet Baby Olivia,” produced by Live Action, an anti-abortion group with stated goals of “shift[ing] public opinion on the killing of preborn children” and “expos[ing] the abortion industry’s exploitation of women for profit.”^{iv}

The “Baby Olivia” video has been denounced by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which stated, “designed to manipulate the emotions of viewers rather than to share evidence-based, scientific information about embryonic and fetal development,” with claims “not aligned with scientific fact, but rather reflect the biased and ideologic perspectives of the extremists who created the video.”^v While this bill may not explicitly name the “Baby Olivia” video, it is clearly aligned with the larger effort to promote anti-abortion goals through potentially misleading or inaccurate materials in the classroom.

The goals of this type of legislation are clear: promote abortion stigma and disinformation. Young people in Maine deserve accurate information that helps them lead healthy lives, not propaganda. I urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 1716.

ⁱ Committee on Adolescent Health Care, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, *Committee Opinion: Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, September 2016, <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2016/11/comprehensive-sexuality-education#:~:text=Studies%20have%20demonstrated%20that%20comprehensive,transmitted%20infections%2C%20and%20adolescent%20pregnancy.>

ⁱⁱ Sex Ed for Social Change, *SIECUS Condemns Tennessee Lawmakers for Passing “The Baby Olivia Bill,”* April 9, 2024, <https://siecus.org/siecus-condemns-tennessee-lawmakers-baby-olivia/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Brown, Elisha, *Anti-abortion ‘Baby Olivia’ video could become required viewing for some schoolkids*, Stateline, February 12, 2025, <https://stateline.org/2025/02/12/anti-abortion-baby-olivia-video-could-become-required-viewing-for-some-schoolkids/>

^{iv} Murphy, Emma, *Oklahoma legislators could require schools to show controversial ‘Baby Olivia’ video*, Oklahoma Voice, March 24, 2025, <https://oklahomavoice.com/2025/03/24/oklahoma-legislators-want-to-require-schools-to-show-controversial-baby-olivia-video/>; LiveAction, *Who We Are*, <https://www.liveaction.org/who-we-are/>

^v Sherman, Carter, *‘Meet Baby Olivia’: spate of new bills would require showing anti-abortion video in schools*, The Guardian, May 21, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/21/meet-baby-olivia-anti-abortion-sex-ed>