



**THE MAINE SENATE**  
**132nd Legislature**

**LD 1716, "An Act to Require Family Life Education to Include a  
Human Growth and Development Curriculum"  
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
April 28, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Stacey Guerin and I have the pleasure of representing Senate District 4. I am here today to introduce LD 1716, "An Act to Require Family Life Education to Include a Human Growth and Development Curriculum."

This bill, also known as The Baby Olivia Act in other states, is a bill that brings vital knowledge into our classrooms to promote healthier pregnancies and stronger communities. This legislation mandates teaching fetal development not just as a matter of science but as a tool to promote safer pregnancy practices that benefit mothers, babies, and families across our great state. Here is a link to the "Baby Olivia video" which is a 3-minute educational video showing the development of a baby inside the womb: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-IQOooYAs8>. This video is shown in schools where this legislation has passed.

Let me begin by explaining why this matters. Maine, like many states, faces challenges with maternal health. Rural areas especially struggle with access to prenatal care as has been demonstrated by several recently announced maternity ward closures. Too often, young people enter adulthood unaware of how their choices impact pregnancy. The Baby Olivia Act addresses this by equipping students with the facts: how a fetus grows, what it needs, and how early decisions can shape outcomes. This isn't abstract biology—it's practical knowledge for life. and Maine has a vested interest in safeguarding its residents' and citizens' health and well-being.

First, let's consider the health argument. Teaching fetal development—beginning with conception, through the first heartbeat at six weeks, to the formation of limbs and organs—shows students the critical stages when a pregnancy is most vulnerable. For example, the CDC notes that folic acid intake before and during early pregnancy reduces neural tube defects by up to 70%. Yet, a 2022 study found only half of teens know this. By educating them early, we empower future parents to make choices—like proper nutrition or avoiding alcohol and harmful drugs—that prevent harm and save lives.

Second, this bill supports safer pregnancies through awareness. In Maine, teen pregnancy rates remain a concern—about 15 per 1,000 girls aged 15-19, according to state data. When students learn that a fetus's brain begins forming at eight weeks or that smoking can stunt growth by the second trimester, they grasp the stakes. This isn't about judgment; it's about giving them tools to protect their health and their children's. Knowledge of fetal milestones can encourage earlier

prenatal care, cutting risks like preterm birth—something Maine saw in 9% of pregnancies last year.

Third, this is workable and unifying. The Baby Olivia Act allows states like Maine to tailor curricula while ensuring medical accuracy. Critics may say this is more about politics, but I can assure you it's for educational purposes and as essential as teaching nutrition or exercise. In a state where we value self-reliance, giving kids the know-how to safeguard a pregnancy aligns with our principles.

With Maine's rural health gaps, where only 72% of pregnant women statewide get first-trimester care—education on fetal development isn't just academic—it's a public health strategy. Teaching students about key stages can foster habits like early prenatal visits or avoiding alcohol, directly supporting safer pregnancies.

Now, some may worry this steps too far into personal and political issues, such as abortion. I respect that view, but this bill isn't about dictating choices—it's about informing them. Maine families deserve a generation that understands how to nurture life safely. We're not mandating morality; we're mandating science that serves public health.

I think of the young women in Bangor or Presque Isle, the young men in Portland or Aroostook County—these are our constituents, and they deserve this education. The Baby Olivia Act is a step toward healthier moms, healthier babies, and healthier communities. It's a chance to lower maternal mortality, reduce birth defects, and give every pregnancy the best shot at success.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting LD 1716. This isn't about red or blue; it's about the red blood of life and the blue skies of possibility for our kids. Let's vote for education that protects, for science that heals, and for a future where every pregnancy thrives.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.