



Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Lisa Margulies, I serve as Vice President of Public Affairs, Maine, for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and I am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 590.

PPNNE provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to approximately 10,000 patients per year in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford, and Topsham, in addition to online via telehealth. People turn to us for affordable, highest quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, immunizations, gender-affirming care, abortion care, as well as a spectrum of primary and behavioral health care services.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to access 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 \$1.25 million dollars in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine. For many, we are their only access to the health care system.

At PPNNE, we have a deep appreciation for the ways that policy and policy implementation, however well-intentioned, impacts the lives of our patients as well as the care we deliver. We have witnessed firsthand policies that disproportionately impact communities of color, leading to starkly different health outcomes. Whether it is how state agencies respond to a public health crisis like a pandemic, policies to address maternal and infant health, or efforts to reduce rates of cancer, outcomes for people of color tell the story of what happens when laws are enacted without careful consideration of potential impact. Racial disparities result from a complex set of factors including socioeconomic disadvantages, resource allocation, and biased decision-making.



Robust data collection and analysis are cornerstones for developing and implementing policies that benefit all people in the state. In the 130th session, we supported two bills passed by the legislature and signed by the governor, LD 2 and LD 1610, that strengthened equitable policy development and public access to and engagement with the legislative process. LD 2 and LD 1610 provided legislators with powerful tools to better understand the racial impacts of their proposals and take intentional steps towards developing more equitable policies. These bills also strengthened the state's capacity to collect, analyze, and publish data for policymaking. In the 131st Session we supported an additional bill that was signed into law, LD 1948, further advancing these goals by augmenting the state's capacity for data analysis and enhancing data sharing across state government.

LD 590 represents the next step in ensuring our state's policies benefit all Mainers. This legislation will enhance the ability of lawmakers to understand the comprehensive impact of legislation under consideration by authorizing nonpartisan legislative staff to collect racial and other demographic data from state agencies. The more informed this Legislature is with regards to the policies it considers, the more equipped it is to act wisely and prudently in shaping the future of our state. I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 590.