



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Testimony of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese in opposition to LD 335 *An Act to Safeguard Reproductive Rights*

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 335. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 48 parishes, it has nine elementary schools, one private elementary school, and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish. Within the diocese, there are also seven subsidized housing units, four rehabilitation and residence facilities, and two child-care centers. There are three Catholic hospitals operating independently of the diocese as well as Catholic Charities Maine, the state's largest social service agency, which operates as a separate corporation.

For the Church, there is no distinction between defending human life and promoting the dignity of the human person. As a gift from God, every human life is sacred from conception to natural death. The life and dignity of every person must be respected and protected at every stage and in every condition. The right to life is the first and most fundamental principle of human rights that leads Catholics to actively work for a world of greater respect for human life and greater commitment to justice and peace.

Catholics have considered universal health care a basic human right since the earliest of times. Jesus' ministry to the sick, injured and marginalized is foundational to our vocation of healing and establishing moral societies where all people are cared for. Christians understand their vocation not only to provide direct care to the sick and injured, but to advocate on their behalf to those responsible for the common good of society. Almost 100 years ago, the Catholic Bishops of the United States called for basic health care for all people and have consistently advocated for this ever since. The important thing to note about this unwavering support is that health care must be life-affirming, not life ending.

This funding would support abortion. Abortion is the intentional taking of innocent human life. We already have 131 federal qualified health care centers in Maine. ¹ Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in Maine offer a comprehensive range of primary care and preventive services to underserved populations. These services typically include women's health.

For these reasons, Title X and other federal family planning programs should be defunded or dramatically restructured to address these serious flaws. REMEMBER: [Six in ten Americans](#) oppose taxpayer funding of abortion.²

I urge you to vote ought to not to pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/

¹ <https://carelistings.com/find/federally-qualified-health-centers/maine>

² Marist Poll, 2018. <https://www.kofc.org/un/en/resources/communications/abortion-limits-favored.pdf>