

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Goldie Irvine, I live in Westbrook, and I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 335.

I wish it didn't need to be said that family planning services offer more than abortion services. Unfortunately, in a rural state like Maine, traditional medical care can be outright inaccessible, whether it's due to geographic location or financial barriers. In small communities, family planning centers may very well be the only option.

Like many young Americans, in my early twenties I found myself unable to afford health insurance, which in turn meant that I could not afford medical care. Uncomfortable with the length of time since my last physical exam, I made an appointment for a routine check up at the Portland Planned Parenthood location. During this exam, which included a routine PAP smear, the Planned Parenthood staff noticed irregularities in the results. They scheduled me for a biopsy; again, a procedure that would otherwise have been inaccessible to me due to my financial situation.

The biopsy uncovered HPV, or human papillomavirus, which is extremely common but can sometimes lead to cancer, especially in women. If I had not been able to access care, and if that care had not been affordable, I would never have known that I had HPV. I would have moved forward with my life, potentially risking the wellbeing of others.

Nearly a decade later, I was unexpectedly laid off from a good job that included health insurance. I again found myself in a vulnerable financial position with no insurance to cover basic medical costs. Again, nearly a decade later, I turned to Planned Parenthood for routine medical care that I could afford. In addition to a physical exam, I was also able to renew my birth control prescription.

I went to Planned Parenthood because their location was the most convenient to my home, but there are other organizations in Maine that provide similar, essential care. Family planning practices are especially needed now, in a political climate that has

turned American healthcare into a rigged, for-profit scheme that leaves thousands of people dying and in debt. People have a right to access medical care without the crippling financial ramifications.

The care provided by family planning centers in Maine is lifesaving, essential, and irreplaceable. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 335.

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