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30 Association Drive, Box 190  
Manchester, ME 04351  
207-622-3374

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Representative Michele Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Dr. Whitten, and I live in Windham, Maine. I am a resident physician training in pediatrics. I represent myself as well as the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and thus, a large network of pediatricians across the state. I stand in support of LD 335 because family planning is an essential facet of healthcare for women, especially in our vulnerable teen population.

2.4 in 1000 teens in Maine between 10 and 17 years of age will get pregnant, which is about 211 adolescents based on population distribution. That's the size of my class A high school's graduating class in southern Maine. 211 young teens will require accessible, timely, and safe healthcare services to either support their healthy pregnancy or to forgo it. If 211 teens are getting pregnant, many many more are sexually active and require the support of healthcare professionals to do it in a safe way. As a new pediatrician, I have already seen the fear in a teenager's eyes when I disclosed their pregnancy test was positive and they hadn't been planning on it. On the flipside, I have also seen others' gratitude and relief when discussing and prescribing contraception. I believe providing this service is a way of protecting them from a huge life change before they are ready for it.

Seperately, as a new mom, I cannot imagine undertaking pregnancy and becoming a parent before you are physically, emotionally, and financially ready for it. I thank the family planning services that were available to me every day that I was free to pursue my goals prior to becoming a parent, as planned.

While 90% of women who do not give birth during adolescence graduate high school, only 50% of teen moms do. This difference in education has generational impacts on earning potential, family stability, and health outcomes. New England is known for very low rates of teen pregnancy which is in part due to our accessible family planning services in the last two decades. If we do not safeguard our funding for these programs, our young women will have less access to needed services which will negatively impact their health, educational opportunities, and futures.

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 335 to safeguard reproductive rights and continue to allow us healthcare professionals to keep our young teens healthy, informed, and safe.