

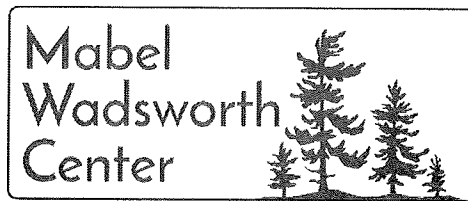


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they/them/theirs
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LD 1040 Public Testimony
An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare
Members

First, I would like to thank the chairs of this committee, Senator Baldacci and Representative Meyer, along with the rest of the Health and Human Services Committee for hearing my testimony today. I would also like to thank Representative Moonen for sponsoring this bill, and the cosponsors for cosponsoring. My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am here today to represent Mabel Wadsworth Center. For those who may not be familiar with us, Mabel's is an independent, feminist, not-for-profit sexual and reproductive health center in Bangor that provides a wide range of services, including abortion care, prenatal care, STI testing, primary care, and gender-affirming hormone therapy. We have become well-known in the state as a competent and safe provider of healthcare for trans people, something that can be too hard to find. While my title has since changed, I came on as a Mabel Wadsworth Center staff member in 2019 as the Client Advocate, with a role focused both on helping people sign up for MaineCare under the expansion and to help our trans patients navigate the barriers to accessing gender-affirming surgery. We are here today to urge you to vote in support of LD 1040.

MaineCare coverage of gender-affirming care has been nothing short of life-changing. I have worked with more patients than I can count who have seen a sharp increase in quality of life because of this coverage. There are the more obvious examples of patients who now feel comfortable in their bodies, who can do things like go to the beach or the gym or the pool without anxiety or



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dysphoria. But there are also the patients who can breathe easier just because they know that the care their community needs is covered.

Gender-affirming care is without any doubt medically necessary. We know this because leading medical institutions, from the American Medical Association to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, recognize it as such. We also know this because trans people with lived experience can tell you. Our trans patients, with their varying transition goals and needs, tell us every day how necessary and valued gender-affirming care is, whether that's the gender-affirming hormone therapy we offer at the center or the gender-affirming surgeries we help patients access. Trans people deserve happy lives where their healthcare needs are met; all people do.

MaineCare has been covering gender-affirming care, and it is time we enshrine that coverage into law and protect the health of trans Mainers. All Maine people deserve access to the healthcare they need. We urge you to vote in support of LD 1040.