

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nicole Clegg and I serve as the Acting CEO at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and I am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 1478.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to more than 14,000 people in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford and Topsham. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, abortion care as well as a variety of primary care services. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide approximately \$3-3.5 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine each year.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to get affordable, high quality 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.

LD 1478's 3.39 million in annual funding for family planning services is crucial step by the Legislature to help PPNNE and the other family planning health centers across the state achieve this vision, enabling providers to continue to offer sexual and reproductive healthcare services including contraceptive care; screening, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections; screening, treatment or referral for cervical cancer; breast cancer screening; pregnancy testing and intrauterine insemination at a free or steeply discounted cost without regard to the at times capricious whims of politicians in Washington.

The case for public funding of family planning services is clear and unambiguous— with access to said services substantially improving the educational, economic and overall well-being of both recipients (as well as their families should they choose to have them) and society as whole. Reliable access to contraception alone is associated with not just substantial reductions in unplanned pregnancies, maternal mortality and childhood poverty— the last of which carries on throughout the life of those studied, but also in significant increases in educational attainment and economic mobility for people who may become pregnant<sup>1</sup>. The impact of other elements of family planning services are similarly dramatic – STI testing and treatment saves lives and

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<sup>1</sup> US Congress Joint Economic Committee, "The Economic Benefits of Birth Control and Access to Family Planning", Updated February 2020, <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/ cache/files/bb400414-8dee-4e39-abd3-c2460fd30e7d/the-economic-benefits-of-birth-control-and-access-to-family-planning.pdf>

stops the spread of disease via treatment including vaccination, education and behavioral changes; pregnancy testing allows people who may become pregnant to make informed decisions earlier and if they choose to carry a pregnancy to term to do so with greater success; while cervical and breast cancer screenings often catch those diseases at stages where treatment is still option. When viewed holistically, publicly funded family planning services represent an almost unparalleled level of return for the public dollar, saving more than \$7 in future spending for every dollar spent, with federal investment alone resulting in over 10 billion dollars in net savings annually<sup>2</sup>.

Tragically, despite the clear evidence in support of publicly financed family planning, federal funding has been frustratingly unreliable over the past decade with access to funds at times held hostage to electoral whims and political grandstanding. This politicization culminated in 2019, when two of Maine’s safety net providers for family planning services, PPNNE and Maine Family Planning, were effectively forced to choose between accepting Federal Title X dollars and providing comprehensive Reproductive Health care for their patients. Simply put, this should not be a choice that health care providers are forced to make, health care decisions should not be dictated by politicians, they should be made by patients in consultation with the providers of their choice.

LD 1478 is the legislature's chance to change that and ensure that the people of Maine are able to access the care that they need, while the state of Maine has allocated funding for family planning services for more than a decade, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England has not received that funding. An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services will mark the first time PPNNE receives state dollars to help offset the cost of free and discounted care. By passing this bill, the legislature can help ensure that all Mainers, no matter where they live, what their income is or whether they have insurance, have access to essential sexual and reproductive healthcare – no matter what. Funding for these services means Mainers can access affordable, patient-centered, quality health care when they need it. It is for all of these reasons that I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1478.

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<sup>2</sup> Jennifer J. Frost, Adam Sonfield, Mia R. Zolna, and Lawrence B. Finer, “Return on Investment: A Fuller Assessment of the Benefits and Cost Savings of the US Publicly Funded Family Planning Program” *The Millbank Quarterly* (2014), [https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/journals/MQ-Frost\\_1468-0009.12080.pdf](https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/journals/MQ-Frost_1468-0009.12080.pdf)