



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese

Written testimony in opposition to LD 616 –

An Act to Protect Health Care Professionals Providing Reproductive Health Care Services

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services Committee, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 616. 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, one diocesan high 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.

It comes as no surprise to any legislator or any member of the public that the Diocese of Portland opposes LD 616. Respect for unborn human life is the foundation of the Church's constant teaching and practice.

The title of this bill truly sticks out to me: An Act to Protect Health Care Professionals Providing Reproductive Health Care Services.

My question for this committee (and for all Maine legislators): Who is protecting vulnerable women who have unexpected pregnancies? Who is protecting the teenage girl who is being pressured to have an abortion by her boyfriend? Maine does not have a parental consent law, it is an "adult involvement law." This is according to Planned Parenthood's own website. Maine is listed as "No parental involvement required."¹ Who is protecting a woman who isn't sure what her choice should/will be but wants to know all her options?

Lowering the standards on who can perform abortions in Maine is the opposite of what we need to do to help protect these women.

There are numerous other abortion related bills which will be heard and voted on this session. Taken in complement with each other, if passed, Maine will be a destination state for abortions. What a tragedy this would be. Women deserve better than abortion, Maine deserves better.

Please vote LD 616 as Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

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

¹ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/stds-birth-control-pregnancy/parental-consent-and-notification-laws>