



## Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

510 Ocean Avenue  
Portland Maine 04103-4936

Telephone: (207) 773-6471  
Facsimile: (207) 773-0182

**Suzanne C. Lafreniere, JD**  
*Office of Public Policy*

---

### **Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese** Written testimony in opposition to LD 935 – **An Act to Remove Barriers to Abortion Coverage in Private Insurance**

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 935. 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 935. Respect for unborn human life is the foundation of the Church's constant teaching and practice.

In 2019, the Maine legislature passed taxpayer funding of abortion over the objections of hundreds of Mainers. I will repeat now what I stated then:

Catholics have considered universal health care a basic human right since the earliest of times. Jesus' ministry to the sick, injured and marginalized is foundational to our vocation of healing and establishing moral societies where all people are cared for. Christians understand their vocation not only to provide direct care to the sick and injured, but to advocate on their behalf to those responsible for the common good of society. Almost 100 years ago, the Catholic Bishops of the United States called for basic health care for all people and have consistently advocated for this ever since. The important thing to note about this unwavering support is that health care must be life-affirming, not life ending. I have lobbied for Medicaid expansion, and for other health care funding because health care is a basic human right. This bill negates a child's human right to live.

May I suggest an amendment to this bill: all pregnancy-related care should be free, not just abortion. If a woman chooses to have a baby, or suffers a miscarriage, or makes the tragic decision to end a life, all care should be treated the same financially. In fact, Democrats for Life have been advocating for #freebirth in DC.<sup>1</sup> With this amendment, a woman's choice would not be as effected by cost, therefore it would be a major step towards fairness. LD 935 as written preferences abortion only.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.democratsforlife.org/images/Make-Birth-Free-White-Paper.pdf>

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 935 as Ought Not to Pass as written. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

\*[www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/)