



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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

Written testimony in support of LD 494 – An Act to Conform State Funding to the Federal Hyde Amendment, Limiting Funding for Some Abortion Services

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in support of LD 494. 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 supports this law. Respect for unborn human life is the foundation of the Church's constant social teaching and social justice ministries.

Ultimately, *abortion is an uncompassionate response* to a difficult pregnancy, one that pits a mother in crisis against her preborn child. Protecting taxpayers from being forced to pay for abortion in violation of their conscience is a principle that has enjoyed historically broad support among Americans, regardless of their otherwise passionately divided views on the topic. It has also been life-saving: some analyses have found that limitations on federal funding of elective abortion, such as the Hyde Amendment, have saved well over two million lives.

The Maine Legislature can better serve the common good by prioritizing policies that comprehensively assist women, children, and families in need in ways that will not only encourage childbirth but make it easier to welcome and raise a new child.

It is a grave injustice that abortion – the intentional act to end a preborn child's life – has been forced on Maine taxpayers who might object as a matter of conscience since 2019. No one should have to support another's abortion – financially or otherwise.

LD 935, An Act to Remove Barriers to Abortion Coverage in Private Insurance, was heard this week in Health Coverage Insurance Financial Services committee. If passed, that bill would require private health insurance to cover abortions. This cost will be passed on to Mainers, just as taxpayer funding of abortion has forced Mainers to financially support abortion since 2019.

There are numerous other abortion related bills which will be heard and voted on this session. Taken in complement with each other, Maine will be a destination state for abortions. This radical expansion of abortion is harmful for women and must end. We pray and work for a day when all elected officials will support policies that protect all human life and provide life-affirming options for both preborn children and their mothers. Women deserve better than abortion.

Please vote LD 494 as Ought to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

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