



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 995 – An Act Requiring Insurance Companies to Cover the Care of Expectant Mothers in Adoption Cases and Provide Notice of That Coverage to Pregnant Women

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 support of LD 995. 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 LD 995. Respect for unborn human life is the foundation of the Church's constant teaching and practice.

This bill requires insurance companies to allow a woman to get a second opinion with a maternal health care provider of her choosing when an abortion is discussed as an option due to a medical issue. It does not require the women to get a second opinion. It requires the health care provider to tell her she has the right to a second opinion, with diagnostic procedures if she chooses, from a maternal health care provider of her choice. It allows her to see an out-of-network maternal health care provider of her choice.

A second opinion is common sense with any major health concern and is especially important when lives are at stake. Many health insurance plans already cover second opinions for major health diagnoses. This bill would simply allow coverage for a second opinion to be available when it comes to the life of an unborn baby.

A week ago, thousands of Mainers came to the Capitol for the hearing in Judiciary on LD 1619. Over 650 people signed up to testify in person and hundreds could not come in person but submitted testimony online. Women told stories about their healthy children and how they were told that their children would not survive. They explained how they were told wrong information at the time and how glad they were that they did not listen. Any heart-wrenching decision like abortion should allow for a second opinion. These stories show how health care professionals can be incorrect, how a second opinion can save lives.

Please vote LD 995 as Ought to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

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