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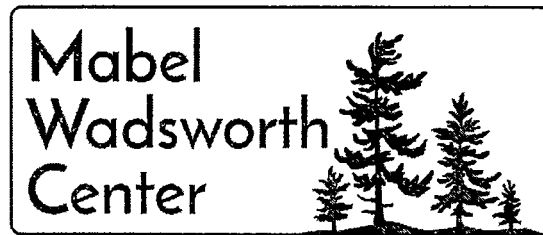
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LD 535 An Act to Increase Access to Necessary Medical Care for Certain Minors
Public Testimony

I would like to begin by thanking the chairs Senator Carney and Representative Moonen along with the rest of the Judiciary Committee for hearing my testimony today. I would also like to thank Representative Sheehan for sponsoring this bill and the cosponsors for cosponsoring. My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am speaking to you today as a representative of Mabel Wadsworth Center in Bangor. Our center provides a range of sexual and reproductive healthcare services, the most relevant of which in this hearing is gender-affirming hormone therapy and general trans-competent healthcare services. Additionally, I have an extensive employment history of working with youth, ranging from in-home behavioral health services to supervising a weekly youth group to leading workshops in school settings. Today, we are here to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 535, An Act to Increase Access to Necessary Medical Care for Certain Minors.

I will be blunt and name the fact that there are violent attacks against transgender people in legislatures across this country happening now, often focused on trans youth. Maine has not been shielded from these attacks, but we have a few good things going for us. Along with existing law that protects trans people and a legislature that seems to, largely, recognize our humanity, we have bills like LD 535 that seek to improve the lives of trans people.

Trans youth deserve bodily autonomy and the right to self-determination. Allowing access to gender-affirming hormone therapy for 16- and 17-year-olds is essential for that. At that age, our youth can get their driver's license, access contraceptives, and apply for college. In an ideal world, all youth, including



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transgender youth, would have support from their parents in accessing the care they need. Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world. We live in a world where too many parents kick out their trans children that were brave enough to come out to them, a world where cable news stations get away with lying about the realities of gender-affirming care for youth, a world where too many people would rather a trans teen be dead than happy and affirmed for who they are.

I mentioned that at these ages, youth can already access contraceptives. Hormonal contraceptives. At 16, I began accessing hormonal birth control. As someone who accessed gender-affirming hormone therapy as an adult, I can say not just with professional perspective but personal perspective as well that there is no good reason to not allow trans youth to access gender-affirming care. The healthcare that the youth of Maine are able to access should not be dependent on the politics or support of their parents.

Gender-affirming hormone therapy is not just life-saving care¹, but joyous care. Providers of gender-affirming care for minors are trained and need room to offer care when indicated. We trust our youth to know their needs and exercise their bodily autonomy. We recognize that Maine youth are people, not the property of their parents. We at Mabel Wadsworth Center urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 535. Thank you for your time.

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35212746/>