



## Maine Women's Lobby

February 20, 2024

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and Honorable Members of the Health Coverage Insurance and Financial Services Committee,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has worked to build gender justice in Maine through legislative advocacy and systems change.

We are here today **in support of LD 2203, An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Federally Approved Nonprescription Oral Hormonal Contraceptives**, and thank Representative Arford for sponsoring this important bill.

**Access to contraception is a vital tool for gender equity.** It has numerous benefits for women and girls, including narrowing the wage gap and reducing chances of needing public assistance<sup>1</sup>. And we know that markers of gender equity are actually stalling out: since the pandemic, 5 million American women have left the workforce<sup>2</sup>, the gender pay gap has increased by about \$1,000 per year<sup>3</sup>, and the cost in lost productivity in our state strictly related to the childcare crisis has more than doubled, to about 403 million<sup>4</sup>.

Nine in ten women have used contraception at some point in their lives<sup>5</sup>, but not everyone has consistent access to this essential healthcare. The cost and logistical challenges of obtaining a prescription, compounded by challenges relating to work and childcare arrangements, create substantial barriers to contraception access - which **disproportionately affect women who are rurally located, low-income, and without reliable access to transportation.**

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<sup>1</sup> Guttmacher. (n.d.). <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/social-economic-benefits.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Forbes. (June 12, 2021). American Women Lost More Than 5 Million Jobs In 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maggiemcgrath/2021/01/12/american-women-lost-more-than-5-million-jobs-in-2020/?sh=341387ec2857>

<sup>3</sup> Cutler Institute. (2022). The Economic Security of Older Women in Maine: A Data Report. Retrieved from <https://www.mainewomen.org/s/EconomicSecurityOlderWomeninMaineReport-FINAL2.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ready Nation. (2023). The Growing Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis in Maine. Retrieved from <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/2173-the-growing-annual-cost-of-the-infant-toddler-child-care-crisis-in-maine>

<sup>5</sup> Brittnei Frederiksen, U. R. (2022, November 18). *Contraception in the United States: A closer look at experiences, preferences, and coverage - findings - 10038*. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/report-section/contraception-in-the-united-states-a-closer-look-at-experiences-preferences-and-coverage-findings/>

This bill, inspired by the landmark FDA approval of the first nonprescription daily oral contraceptive, represents a significant milestone in reproductive freedom and offers a tangible solution to mitigate challenges faced by Maine families. **By mandating insurance coverage of all FDA-approved over-the-counter contraceptive methods, this bill addresses financial barriers that hinder access to essential reproductive care.**

Basic rights, including reproductive autonomy should not be limited only to those who can afford it. Increasing access to birth control is just one step in the ongoing work for gender equity in Maine.

**We hope you will vote Ought to Pass.**

Sincerely,

Destie Hohman Sprague  
Maine Women's Lobby