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Testimony Neither For Nor Against:

LD 210, "An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027"

February 24, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Laura Harper. I'm a Senior Associate at Moose Ridge Associates, I live in Hallowell and I'm here today on behalf of my client, Maine Family Planning or MFP.

As you consider the Governor's proposed biennial budget, I urge you once again to add language to increase state funding for Maine's family planning network, as contained in LD 143, "An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services." This funding was supported by the majority of Appropriations and Financial Affairs members at the end of the last session, as well as the majority of Health and Human Services members. Several of you were co-sponsors of last session's bill and are once again this session. We are grateful for your steadfast support for maintaining access to sexual and reproductive health care statewide. Thank you for fighting for us then and continuing that fight this session.

Today, we come before you renewing our ask and imploring you to commit to storm-proofing Maine's statewide family planning system by adding \$6.18 million to the biennial budget in on-going funding to maintain access to these lifesaving services.

For 50 years, MFP, an independent, private not-for-profit, has served as the State of Maine's statewide grantee for federal Title X funds and for State funds allocated to support the provision of clinical sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. As the statewide grantee, MFP provides SRH services in 19 sites in some of the state's most rural communities—including Calais, Rumford, and Ft. Kent as well as one mobile medical unit that allows us to better serve patients who are less able to visit our brick and mortar sites. MFP also manages subcontracts with a host of community-based providers, including: Planned Parenthood of Northern New England with four health centers in Southern Maine; 32 Federally Qualified Health Centers with sites throughout the state; and with 8 school-based health centers. Altogether, Maine's sexual and reproductive health care network consists of 63 individual sites.

In Calendar Year 2023, Maine's statewide network of providers served 32,006 unduplicated individuals for such SRH services as: contraceptive care; screening, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections; screening and treatment for cervical cancers; breast cancer screening and referral; intrauterine insemination; vasectomy; pregnancy testing and

comprehensive pregnancy options counseling. 72 percent of the patients served by Maine's family planning network live at 250 percent of poverty or below and for 60 percent of the patients the network serves, their visit for sexual and reproductive health care is the ONLY health care visit they will make in the course of a year.

Among the 63 sites funded or operated by MFP, only Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE) and MFP provide abortion care. No federal or state grant funds are used by either to support the abortion care either organization provides, a fact that has been proven beyond the shadow of a doubt by the regular audits conducted by our federal funding source, the US Department of Health and Human Services.

PPNNE and MFP's commitment to the proposition that abortion should not be siloed and is indeed part of the full range of SRH services has come at a heavy price on the federal level. In 2019, both organizations withdrew from the federal Title X/National Family Planning Program, at a cost of \$2 million per year, rather than comply with a Trump Administration rule requiring physical separation of abortion care from Title X-supported services and a prohibition on providing referrals or information about abortion care. To temporarily fill the funding gap, private funds were raised and irreplaceable financial reserves—set aside by MFP on its part for just such a rainy day--were used. No clinics closed; no staff were laid off; no patient went without services.

The State of Maine's support of SRH services has been stalled at \$978,000 annually for the last ten years. In the meantime, the cost of living and the cost of providing health care has risen exponentially. To keep pace with the job market we have raised salaries and increased fringe benefits all the while managing an array of other increasing expenses, including, but not limited to, increases in the cost of medical supplies, facilities, equipment, and information technology. Furthermore in a post-Dobbs world, the private funds MFP was able to access in 2019 are no longer available; donors have prioritized states with severe restrictions on abortion.

Your committees have in their power the ability to protect and preserve our state health system's most embattled services. Flat funding by the State of Maine and by the US Department of Health and Human Services at the federal level over the last 10 years, combined with increasingly aggressive conservative activism in courts, legislatures across the country, and in Washington, DC compels us to request that the state consider increasing financial support in the amount of \$6,180,000 per year specifically for Maine's statewide network of family planning providers. This would offset the increasing cost of providing health care while sustaining the high level of safety net care provided. It also prepares the network for the inevitable loss of all Title X funding. We urge you to consider adding the language from LD 143 establishing this funding to your final version of the biennial budget.

Thank you for your attention and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.