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Testimony in opposition:  
LD 492, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Provide for  
Parental Rights"  
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
March 4, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Laura Harper, I'm a senior associate at Moose Ridge Associates and I live in Hallowell. I'm here today on behalf of my client, Maine Family Planning, to testify in opposition to LD 492, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Provide for Parental Rights."

Maine Family Planning provides comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care to teens and adults at 19 locations statewide. Our mission is to ensure that all people have access to high-quality, culturally relevant and affordable sexual and reproductive health care services, comprehensive sexual health education, and the right to control their sexual and reproductive lives.

Maine law currently empowers young people to take control of their sexual and reproductive health, allowing minors to obtain important health care services without notifying or getting permission from a parent or guardian, including birth control prescriptions, abortion care, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and/or HIV. For teens 16 and older, the law also allows them to access gender affirming care without parental permission. Pursuant to the statutory provision around family planning services for minors, clinicians make confidential reproductive health services available to teens in health care settings across the state, from pediatricians' offices to family planning clinics to emergency rooms treating survivors of sexual assault.

Happily, many young people choose voluntarily to involve a safe adult in their sexual and reproductive health care decisions. All teens who come to a Maine Family Planning health center are counseled by an experienced medical professional about the benefit of involving a parent or guardian. The majority of our teen patients are able to do so.

But some are not. And it's those young people we are most concerned about. Because those teens who can't talk to an adult about sexual and reproductive health care don't stop having sex in the face of parental consent requirements. Instead, they just stop getting the health care they need. A 2019 survey of youth ages 14 to 24, published in the Journal of Pediatrics, found youth may lie about their risk behaviors or not seek health care when concerned about confidentiality.

Our concern is that this constitutional amendment could not only endanger teens who face a risk of abuse or violence in their homes, but it also places them at risk for unintended pregnancy, untreated STIs, and unhealthy relationships.

Leading medical organizations agree that confidentiality is critical to building trust between patients and providers. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecology, "Confidential care for adolescents is important because it encourages access to care and increases discussions about sensitive topics and behaviors that may substantially affect their health and well-being."

Combined with comprehensive, age-appropriate, and inclusive sexuality education, access to health care can help young Mainers build healthy futures and families. Please help to ensure that Maine teens will continue to have the right to protect their sexual and reproductive health, and vote LD 492 "Ought Not to Pass."

Thank you.