

Meredith Ruxton McIntosh

Hallowell, Maine

LD 143

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I'm Meredith Ruxton McIntosh, I'm live in Hallowell and I'm here to testify in support of LD 143, An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services.

I was 16 on my first visit to Planned Parenthood, though I wish it had been sooner. I didn't have anyone that would talk to me about how my body worked or why things happened the way they did. My parents literally handed me a dictionary when I asked questions. The lack of information left me vulnerable to people taking advantage of my ignorance.

After overhearing a classmate talking about the healthcare she received at Planned Parenthood I looked them up in the yellow pages (this was 1986). I didn't have a car or anyone that could take me to an appointment, so I had to skip school and take the bus for over an hour to attend an appointment that I had waited for over a month. A closer and/or a more robustly staffed facility would have been immensely beneficial.

I didn't have money to pay so I was grateful to know that I could get the information and care that I needed without the worry of impending debt. The staff were kind, respectful and patient with my many questions. I continued to rely on Planned Parenthood over the next 25 years for a variety of medical needs, in different cities and states knowing that I could trust them.

If I had had access to the care and information earlier in my life I could have avoided some health issues that I have carried with me since I was very young. These issues caused physical and emotional pain as well as heartbreak and loss in my family planning journey. Without the medical care and counseling that I was able to access through Planned Parenthood I would have likely dropped out of high school, never joined the military, never attended college or trade school and most certainly would have indulged in addictive substances to the detriment of my life.

Members of the Committee, I'm asking you to please vote Ought to Pass on LD 143. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share my testimony.

Meredith Ruxton McIntosh