



Rachel Talbot Ross
Senator, District 28

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross in support of
**LD 143, An Act to Improve Women's Health and Economic Security by Funding
Family Planning Services**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

March 10, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Senator Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of Portland and Peaks Island.

I am proud to be a co-sponsor of LD 143, which would preserve access to essential health care for tens of thousands of Mainers. I thank Senate Majority Leader Teresa Pierce and Representative Kristen Cloutier for spearheading this important initiative.

LD 143 would provide \$6.18 million in funding for Maine's family planning network, a system that serves over 31,000 patients yearly, many of whom have no other provider. It safeguards against the growing threats to reproductive and preventive health care, ensuring that Maine remains a state where everyone — no matter their income, background, sexual orientation, gender identity, or zip code — can receive the care they need.

Maine's family planning network is a critical part of our state's health care system, particularly for those in rural and underserved communities. Across 61 service sites and a mobile health unit, these providers deliver preventive and primary care, birth control, cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, and behavioral health services. All of these important services are not just for women — Maine's family planning clinics provide essential care for men and non-binary persons as well.

For many Mainers, these clinics are the only health care provider they will see in a year. Without them, tens of thousands of people — many without insurance or the financial means to pay for private care — would be left without essential, life-saving health services. In some rural areas, clinics have been forced to reduce their hours to just one day a week due to financial constraints. LD 143 would not only keep these clinics open, but also allow them to expand hours and improve access to care for those who rely on them.



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Despite their crucial role in our health care system, Maine's family planning providers face an unsustainable financial reality. Current state funding for family planning has remained stagnant for a decade, covering only a fraction of the costs these providers shoulder. Meanwhile, as this committee is well aware, demand and costs for these essential services have grown, and providers have absorbed millions of dollars in uncompensated care to keep their doors open.

Funding family planning services is not only a moral and public health imperative but a fiscally responsible investment. Every dollar spent on family planning services saves nearly six dollars in future health care costs by preventing unintended pregnancies, reducing the need for emergency care, and catching diseases early. Failing to act will not make the need for care disappear — it will simply shift the burden to hospital emergency rooms, increasing costs for providers and, ultimately, taxpayers.

Maine has always been a leader in ensuring health care access, and today, we can reaffirm that commitment by passing LD 143. I urge the committee to support this bill and ensure that Maine's family planning network remains strong, stable, and accessible for all. Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Talbot Ross".

Rachel Talbot Ross
State Senator, District 28
Representing part of Portland and Peaks Island