



March 13th, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services;

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 518 Resolve, Increasing Access to Maternal and Child Health Care** and we thank Representative Meyer for sponsoring this important bill.

Maternal health and mortality in Maine, and the United States, is among the worst in the developed world. As the only developed country without either universal health care or paid family leave, we experience significantly higher rates of maternal and infant mortality and decreased maternal and postpartum health. The CDC released the first report in a decade on maternal mortality in 2020 and the result was worse than expected: 17.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018, placing the U.S. last among the world's wealthiest nations.¹

There are several key interventions that address this crisis; the first is access to high quality prenatal care, the second is access to high quality postpartum care. **In-home visiting, as exemplified by Maine's CradeME program, is the gold standard for such support.** Evidence based home visiting has been shown to lower the risks of child abuse and negligence; reduces the chances of postpartum depression; and help children reach developmental milestones.²

When coupled with economic infrastructure such as paid family and medical leave, one of the most powerful social programs to improve postpartum outcomes (such as encouraging breastfeeding and decreasing maternal depression)³, these programs can revolutionize the postpartum period, creating dramatically better health and economic outcomes for families.

In the last 12-14 years, life-saving, evidence-based programs like CradleME and public health nursing have been scaled back or eliminated in Maine, despite the clear call for these programs across the public health sector, the DV Homicide Review Panel, the Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel, and more. We know they work, and a resolve like this one can help ensure that we are keeping our collective focus on real solutions to improve the welfare of Maine moms and families.

We hope you will vote 'ought to pass' on LD 518.

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

Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director
Maine Women's Lobby

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, January 30). National Vital Statistics Report. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr69/nvsr69-02-508.pdf>

² Maternal Care Coalition. (2024). The Importance of Evidence-based home visiting. Retrieved from <https://maternitycarecoalition.org/news/importance-evidence-based-home-visiting>.

³ American Academy of Pediatrics. (2024). Retrieved from <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/154/5/e2024068958/199722/Paid-Family-and-Medical-Leave-Policy-Statement?autologincheck=redirected>