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Testimony in Support of LD 1079
An Act to Provide Comprehensive Perimenopause and Menopause Education *Presented to*
the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
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Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Mattie Daughtry. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Senate District 23 in the Legislature, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island and part of Yarmouth. I am here in strong support, and as the lead co-sponsor, of LD 1079, “An Act to Provide Comprehensive Perimenopause and Menopause Education.”

I speak today because half our constituents are women. We have a responsibility to ensure our constituents have access to healthcare. Perimenopause and menopause are significant stages in our lives that affect over half the Maine population. Yet, despite the broad impact of these transitions, education and awareness around these stages of life remain insufficient. The lack of accurate, accessible information leads to unnecessary confusion, misdiagnosis and increased healthcare costs. This is a stage of life that women are not prepared for or educated on in our society. In my high school health class, I don’t think it was mentioned once. Outside of some jokes about hot flashes and mood swings, most of us know next to nothing about this chapter in life.

I will be honest — even standing here before you now, I know only the “high level” summary of what may happen to me when I reach that stage of my life.

Perimenopause (which for those who may not know, are the years leading up to menopause) and menopause itself bring about significant hormonal changes that can cause symptoms such as hot flashes, sleep disturbances, cognitive difficulties, mood swings, cardiovascular changes, and bone density loss. These symptoms can severely impact a person’s quality of life, productivity, and mental health. However, because menopause education is not a standard part of health curricula or medical training, many individuals and even healthcare providers are unprepared to address these changes effectively.

A 2022 study found that nearly 80% of women feel unprepared for menopause (1), and more than half report that their symptoms interfere with daily life. Furthermore, one in four consider leaving their jobs due to severe symptoms. This is not just a healthcare issue—it is an economic and workforce issue.

(1) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10469514/#:~:text=Results,menopause%20education%20at%20school%20themselves.>

Shockingly, research indicates that less than 20% of OB-GYN residency programs in the U.S. include menopause education as a required component (2). This lack of training means that many primary care providers are not equipped to diagnose and manage menopause-related health issues, leading to frequent misdiagnoses, inappropriate treatments, or dismissal of symptoms.

Moreover, many people experiencing perimenopause are unaware that symptoms can begin in their late 30s or early 40s, causing confusion and unnecessary anxiety during critical periods in adult life. This is particularly concerning for historically under resourced communities in Maine, where access to healthcare and health literacy disparities exacerbate the issue.

We can work to turn this tide. To address this crisis, I urge the committee to support this legislation that directs the Department of Health and Human Services to support health care providers, including obstetricians and gynecologists, and community-based health care programs and hospitals to create informational materials for perimenopause and menopause education.

This bill is just a start, but, investing in menopause education is an investment in public health, workforce retention and the overall well-being of our state. By equipping individuals with accessible evidence-based knowledge and ensuring our healthcare system is prepared to support them, we can transform menopause from a misunderstood phase of life into one that is navigated with dignity, awareness, support, and adequate care.

Last year, I moderated a panel set up by Maine's Jackson Laboratory about a condition that impacts 1 in 10 women; endometriosis. They are leading the nation in conducting research about this disease. I was alarmed to learn that, as this condition impacts only women--it has been understudied and under-understood by medical providers. Patients young and old shared their stories about the lack of treatment and understanding from their providers about their experience. Many noted that the lack of information seems unjust. I share this to illustrate just how much of womens' health is understudied and given little resources. I am glad Maine can play a role in changing this and investing in women's health. Like menopause awareness and education, endometriosis is yet another part of women's health that is ignored and misunderstood.

I urge this committee to take action and ensure that comprehensive perimenopause and menopause education becomes a priority in our state. I challenge everyone on this committee to ask a woman over age 45 in their lives about how they learned about what menopause symptoms are and what resources are available. There is a true lack of information available. We can and should change that. Women shouldn't have to wait until they feel like everything is wrong to know what they are going through. Partners, and frankly all of us, should know more about this part of life so we can support women of all ages across Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

(2) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23632655/>