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Testimony of Rep. Jan Dodge introducing
**LD 217, An Act to Require Schools to Provide Access to Free Condoms for
Students in Grades 9 to 12 in the School Nurse's Office**
Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

Good morning, Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy and esteemed colleagues of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Jan Dodge, and I represent House District #39 – Belfast, Northport and Belmont.

I am before you today to ask for your support in protecting Maine's high school students from sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies.

This bill was crafted with the help of a local retired school nurse who instituted this program at a nearby high school and is modeled on legislation passed in Vermont several years ago.

Based on the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey and our knowledge of human nature, we know there are teens who are sexually active. Many of those students may not have access to adequate protection from the consequences of their actions. Concern about pregnancy and infection is not a sufficient deterrent.

Please consider a teen who lives in a rural area where the nearest drugstore is thirteen or fourteen miles away. This teenager does not have a license. This teen may be contemplating or is already in a sexual relationship. This teen may not have a parent who will help them to be protected. My students in this situation were grateful for the availability of condoms in our school nurse's office a decade ago.

The bill language limits access to students in grades 9 to 12 and protects students who may have an allergy to latex. This bill will provide preemptive access to birth control for teens in the future if actions taken in Washington, D.C. were to limit availability of birth control methods.

I would like to offer an amendment that removes the words "in the school nurse's office" from the title and adds language on line 15 after the words "nurse's office" that states: "or locations authorized by the school nurse." This will allow flexibility related to the many variations on

school physical layouts and what they deem to be a nurse's office, as well as allowing for access when the nurse is out of the building.

Please support LD 217.

Thank you.