

Janis Hogan BUS, RN, NCSN
Nationally Certified School Nurse
Maine School Nurse of the Year 2018-2019
108 Cedar Street
Belfast, ME 04915
jhogan1953@gmail.com

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Janis Hogan. I am a nationally certified school nurse and served 24 of my 48 year career in school nursing. I am here today in support of LD 217. I want to thank my legislator, Jan Dodge, for introducing this bill.

Teen sexual health has been a concern since I first started working as a high school nurse. When talking with students about preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI's), they often admitted to not using condoms. Without a school policy on condom distribution, dispensing them from the health office was uncomfortable. This led to advocating for this unmet student health need. With support from the school physician, administration, parents, staff and students, I presented a proposal for free condom access to the school board. The school board unanimously approved the proposal and added a Safer Sex addendum to our school wellness policy.

I published an article in the national journal NASN School Nurse to share my advocacy with school nurses around Maine and the nation. Many school nurses wrote that they wished for the support and the time to introduce this in their schools. This is still the case in Maine leading me to this statewide legislation.

The 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey reports 52% of students are sexually active by grade 12, yet less than 55% of teens reported using a condom. Preventing

unintended teen pregnancies and STI's is so important. Untreated STIs can lead to health problems, such as organ damage, certain types of cancer and infertility. Teen pregnancy and childbearing result in both high social and economic costs nationally accounting for billions of tax dollars. Only 50% of teen mothers obtain a high school degree. Children of teen mothers are more likely to have lower school achievement, to drop out of school and have more health problems. The costs are high.

Providing condoms in schools makes sense. In the American Academy of Pediatrics 2013 policy statement, *Condom Use by Adolescents*, recommendations include removing restrictions and barriers to condom availability and designating schools as appropriate sites for condom distribution due to ease of access.

In Maine, by statute, teens may access contraceptive care without parental consent and there are no restrictions to buying condoms. However, the purchase of condoms is limited to local pharmacies, small convenience or grocery stores, where anonymity, cost and transportation, for some, are real barriers. All Maine students deserve equitable access to resources to protect their health and public schools serve every area, no matter how rural.

The current language in LD 217 mandates that condoms can only be accessed via the school nurse's office. Allowing only school nurses to provide condoms would present a barrier to access, especially for schools without a full time school nurse, and more rural and small schools. I request that committee members amend the bill to make it more equitable by changing the language to say that condoms can be accessed in the school nurse's office "or locations authorized by the school nurse."

For these reasons, I urge your support of LD 217.