



April 14th, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;

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 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"** and we thank Representative Dodge for sponsoring this important bill.

35% of Maine's high school students report having had sex.<sup>1</sup> For high school seniors, that number jumps to 52.8%. Regardless of your personal opinions on their behavior, sex among high school students is happening. Only 54.9% of Maine high school students reported using a condom the last time they had sex.<sup>2</sup>

Placing condoms in school nurses' offices gives teens access to the tools that they need to prevent pregnancy and STI transmission.

Making condoms accessible in schools is correlated in an uptick in condom use among high schoolers, and is not associated with a decline in the use of other forms of contraceptives.<sup>3</sup> Decreasing barriers to condom access empowers these students to make safer choices.

Providing access to condoms makes all students safer, but is especially important for young women who are disproportionately impacted by the consequences of unintended pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy is associated with lower educational attainment and higher likelihood of requiring public

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<sup>1</sup> Maine Department of Health and Human Services, and Maine Department of Education. *Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2023 Report*. Via <http://maine.gov/miyhs/2023-results>. Accessed April 12, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Division of Adolescent and School Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018. *Condom Availability Programs in Schools: a Review of the Literature*. Via <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30068218/>. Accessed April 12, 2025.

assistance for parents, and poorer educational and health outcomes for their children.<sup>4</sup>

Despite pregnancy requiring a joint contribution, biological and social realities mean it is often women and girls who experience the majority of the negative impacts of teenage pregnancy. Women and girls experience higher rates of bullying and social ostracization than their male counterparts after a teenage pregnancy.<sup>5</sup> They also are more likely to experience negative educational and economic impacts.

Promoting condom use among teens is a simple step to protect the young women who are disproportionately impacted by teenage pregnancy. LD 217 makes this resource more accessible for all, with a significant benefit to the women and girls of Maine.

**We hope you will vote 'ought to pass' on LD 217.** Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Serena Klebba, Policy Intern  
Maine Women's Lobby

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<sup>4</sup> Congressional Research Service, 2024. *Teen Birth Trends: In Brief*. Via <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45184>. Accessed April 12, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Barker KM, Subramanian SV, Selman R, Austin SB in JMIR Pediatr Parent, 2019. *Gender Perspectives on Social Norms Surrounding Teen Pregnancy: A Thematic Analysis of Social Media Data*. Via <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6753897/>. Accessed April 12, 2025.