



Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, my name is Lisa Margulies, I serve as Vice President of Public Affairs, Maine, for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and I am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 1734.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care in approximately 10,000 visits per year in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford, and Topsham, as well as online via telehealth. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, behavioral health care, abortion care, gender-affirming care, as well as a variety of primary care services.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to access affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make, and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality. All people deserve to access comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion and gender-affirming care, free from shame, stigma, and intimidation. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$1.2 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine. For many, we are their only access to the health care system.

LD 1734 helps reduce barriers to accessing over-the-counter medications, including contraception, by exempting these purchases from the sales taxes that are currently charged at point of sale. This is an extension of existing Maine law that provides such exemptions for prescription medications.

Over-the-counter medications are no less necessary for the health and wellbeing of Mainers than prescription medications. The broad range of over-the-counter contraceptives available to consumers are critical in ensuring their sexual and reproductive health and the welfare of our communities. Contraceptives empower individuals to plan for the future, including whether and when to have children, and have myriad social and economic benefits like improved educational and employment outcomesⁱ and positive impacts on family stability, child well-being, and mental health.ⁱⁱ

It's worth noting that last year marked a historic milestone for sexual and reproductive health care with the rollout of the first FDA-approved over-the-counter daily oral contraceptive, the Opill. The Opill removes barrier to contraceptive access for Mainers who otherwise may struggle to obtain a prescription, particularly in rural areas.

At a time when many people struggling to cover basic needs, over-the-counter medications represent a real hit to the pocketbooks of everyday people, costing the average American just under \$450 annually.ⁱⁱⁱ This bill would ease some of the financial burden on Mainers making tough choices on how to spend their limited resources. It would also send the



message that the legislature acknowledges that Mainers need and deserve access to the health care they need, including reproductive health care. If this bill is enacted, Maine would join growing cohort of at least nine other states and the District of Columbia that exempt over-the-counter medications from sales taxes.^{iv}

At a time of extraordinary national upheaval, Maine has continually stood at the forefront of efforts to ensure that all people have access to comprehensive reproductive health care. LD 1734 would further protect the rights of Maine people to control their bodies and their futures by enhancing their ability to access over-the-counter birth control as well as a multitude of other much needed medications. I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1734.

ⁱ <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/social-economic-benefits.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Adam Sonfield et al., *The Social and Economic Benefits of Women's Ability To Determine Whether and When to Have Children*, Mar 2013, <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/broad-benefits-contraceptive-use-united-states>



ⁱⁱⁱ Sales Tax Exemption, *CHPA*, <https://www.chpa.org/our-issues/other-issues/sales-tax-exemption>

^{iv} Fuscaldo, Donna "9 States That Don't Tax Over-the-Counter Medicines", *AARP*, February 12, 2024, <https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/states-that-do-not-tax-otc-medicine/>