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Testimony in opposition:  
LD 1974 An Act to Affirm Parental Rights  
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
May 16, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Laura Harper, I'm a senior associate at Moose Ridge Associates and I live in Hallowell. I'm here today on behalf of my client, Maine Family Planning, to testify in opposition to LD 1974, "An Act to Affirm Parental Rights."

Maine Family Planning has been a trusted source for high-quality, confidential, and affordable reproductive and sexual health services for more than 50 years. We are on the frontline of providing comprehensive sexual health education to advance equitable and accessible reproductive health care services. We connect nearly 30,000 patients to care annually across 63 health centers.

In accordance with the law, health care providers make confidential reproductive health services available to teens in health care settings across the state, including at family planning clinics, in pediatricians' offices, and in emergency rooms treating survivors of sexual assault.

Maine statute grants minors the legal authority to make informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health. Under this provision, young people are permitted to access critical health care services without the requirement of parental notification or consent, including contraception, abortion care, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and/or HIV. Gender affirming care is also permitted without parental permission for teens over 16 years of age.

Young patients are significantly more likely to seek care for contraception, STI testing, and other sexual health services when they trust their privacy will be protected. Receiving trusted care also helps foster trust in the health care system and greater health literacy among young people.

At Maine Family Planning, our experienced medical professionals who see teen patients do indeed counsel each patient about the benefit that comes with involving a parent or guardian in their sexual and reproductive health care decisions. And a majority of young people we see do voluntarily choose that route.

However, not every teen feels safe involving a parent or guardian in these conversations. And unfortunately, if this bill were to become law, we know many teen patients would stop getting the time-sensitive health care they need. For teens who face a risk of abuse or violence in their homes if

they were to discuss the need to seek sexual health services, a blanket parental consent law is downright dangerous. Avoiding necessary care puts teens at risk for unintended pregnancy, untreated STIs, and unhealthy relationships.

ACOG and other leading medical organizations agree, confidentiality is a best practice that empowers patients and providers to build trust. “Confidential care for adolescents is important because it encourages access to care and increases discussions about sensitive topics and behaviors that may substantially affect their health and well-being,” ACOG states.

Comprehensive, age-appropriate, inclusive sexual education, together with confidential access to sexual and reproductive health care is what young Mainers sorely need to build healthy futures that they want and deserve. Confidentiality is about safety, access, and positive health outcomes. Smart policy protects confidentiality as a cornerstone of public health, whereas LD 1974 would put the health of young Mainers at risk and contribute to the spread of sexually transmitted infections. We urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1974. Thank you.