



Testimony in Support of:
L.D. 335, An Act to Protect Funding for Family Planning Services
by Heide Lester on behalf of EqualityMaine

February 25, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Heide Lester and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support L.D. 335 and believe it is essential to ensure that adequate funding is available for the providers that thousands of people around the state, including LGBTQ+ people, rely on for their care.

Of the nearly 30,000 patients who receive services each year through more than 60 healthcare sites statewide, over 80% qualify for free or reduced cost care.¹ Many of these sites are rural, and often, family planning clinicians are the only medical providers patients see in a year. Thousands of Mainers rely on family planning providers for many types of healthcare including but not limited to: primary care, pregnancy services, cancer screenings, mental and behavioral services, screenings for diabetes, and sexually transmitted infections testing and treatment. It is also important to note that family planning providers connect patients with essential social services and agencies that cover other basic needs like food and housing. Meanwhile, these providers are also contending with the increasing costs of delivering care, growing demand for free and reduced care, insufficient reimbursement rates, and ongoing political attacks. Additionally, Maine is experiencing an active HIV cluster and skyrocketing rates of sexually transmitted infections,² and family planning providers are among those who have been working tirelessly to ensure everyone has access to testing, prevention, and treatment.

The case for funding of family planning services is clear: the availability of services substantially improves the educational, economic, and overall well-being of recipients, their families, and society as a whole, and yields cost savings for the healthcare system at large.³ We ask you to vote "Ought to Pass" on L.D. 335 in order to ensure that everyone has access to essential healthcare. As health providers are serving more patients than ever without sufficient support, there has never been a more critical time to invest in Maine's family planning network.

Thank you.

¹ "Maine Family Planning at a Glance." Maine Family Planning, mainefamilyplanning.org/get-involved/for-media/.

² "Health Advisory Notices." Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention, maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/newhan.shtml.

³ Frost, Jennifer J., et al. "Return on Investment: A Fuller Assessment of the Benefits and Cost Savings of the US Publicly Funded Family Planning Program." *Milbank Quarterly*, vol. 92, no. 4, Wiley, Oct. 2014, doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12080.