

Hello Senator and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Ashley Smith and I'm a resident of Belgrade, present to urge you to support LD 335, "*An Act to Safeguard Reproductive Rights.*" While Maine has laws in place to protect the right to access an array of reproductive healthcare, the federal funding allocated to those professionals is inadequate. For nearly six decades, Title X Organizations have provided access to preventative care for individuals who are uninsured, have low incomes and to communities in the most rural parts of our state. In order to continue to provide these necessary resources to those individuals and communities, we must seek additional funding from the state.

My personal testimony begins when I was seeking care six years ago. It was in the winter of 2020 I had been furloughed from my job twice in one calendar year. I lived alone in an apartment, uninsured, financially insecure and in need of medical care. I was fortunate to learn about Maine Family Planning, who offered me an income-based sliding scale payment option for my visit. Imagine how it felt when the financial barrier was removed and I now had access to quality and compassionate care. Care that would provide me with life saving cancer screenings, mammogram referrals, as well as the diagnosis and effective treatment of a chronic disorder that radically changed my life.

The flat funding of these organizations is a constant threat to their existence. And if these Title X clinics ceased to exist, it would have a profound impact on our state's public health. With increasing inflation and the rising costs of nearly everything in our lives, more and more people like me will be forced to decide what is of more value to them; health and well-being or food and shelter. The politicizing and perpetual insufficient funding of these clinics is such a demoralizing way of telling your most marginalized and vulnerable constituents that they are not worthy of receiving basic healthcare.

And that is why I call upon you to support LD 335. Because I believe that all Mainers deserve the resources and accessibility to make sustainable decisions about their healthcare. And the recipients of this funding provide exactly that. They provide client-centered, high quality and economical care to our Maine communities and individuals that deserve it the most.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I urge you to vote "*ought to pass*" on LD 335.