

Sheldon Hussiere

Augusta

Testimony in Support: LD 335, An Act to Safeguard Reproductive Rights

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am here today in support of LD 335, "An Act to Safeguard Reproductive Rights".

My name is Sheldon, proud dad of a 13-year-old. I am here to speak up for not just her but all the children and young adults of Maine that rely on the neighborhood clinics that LD335 would support.

Maine has a lot of young adults who live down dirt roads an hour from the nearest hospital. There are Kids whose parents are working double shifts just to keep the heat on, and who cannot afford to miss a day's pay to drive two hours round-trip for a doctor's appointment.

LD335 is not about politics. It is about the knot I feel in my stomach when I think about those kids. It is about the 14-year-old girl on my daughter's softball team who has no one to talk to about her crushing anxiety because the only available counselor is booked out for months. It is about the quiet kid in their class whose parents cannot get time off for his annual check-up, so a sports physical gets skipped, and an undiagnosed heart murmur gets missed.

The Maine Family Planning and Planned Parenthood clinics supported by this bill are the only lifeline for these young adults. They are the places where a kid can walk in and get a simple strep test without their parents losing a day's wages. They are where a young woman can get her first cancer screening, or a young man can get help for depression before it spirals. They are the front line of defense for the most basic health care needs.

When we force rural clinics to close their doors, we are not just closing buildings. We are telling our young people that their health, their future, does not matter. We create a generation growing up believing that pain and sickness are just something you have to endure alone. That breeds hopelessness. And a hopeless kid, a sick kid, they can't focus in school. They cannot dream about the future. The ripple effects are felt in every classroom, on every town corner, and in every business.

I stand here desperate because I see the barriers my daughter's friends face every day. I stand here hopeful because you have the power to tear those barriers down. By supporting

this bill, you are telling every kid in our rural communities that they are seen, that they are valued, and that their health matters as much as any kid in Portland or Bangor.

Please, give them that hope. Support LD335. Thank you.