



Testimony in support of LD 1

An Act to Establish the COVID-19 Patient Bill of Rights

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Nicole Clegg and I serve as the Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and am pleased to submit testimony in support LD 1.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to more than 14,000 people in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford and Topsham. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, and cancer screenings, abortion care as well as a variety of primary care services. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$4 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to get 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.

When the State of Maine issued its stay at home order almost year ago, we knew PPNNE had an important role to play in maintaining time-sensitive and urgent care for our patients and alleviating the burden for providers testing and treating COVID-19 patients. It was critical that we continued providing care in our communities. We knew the unfortunate reality would be that the pandemic would make existing barriers to care worse for many of the communities we serve. This proved especially true for people of color, LGBTQ people, people who live in rural areas, people struggling financially, and those uninsured.

The health and safety of our patients and staff is and always will be our top priority. To meet patient needs during the pandemic, PPNNE quickly and effectively launched an expanded telehealth program last April. Through telehealth, patients were able to access services with fewer or shorter visits or without needing to visit a health center at all, allowing providers to answer patient questions, manage prescriptions, and help them address their health care needs remotely. PPNNE was also able to respond and provide time-sensitive primary care to our patients and people who could not see their medical provider as other primary care providers closed or reduced hours and services.

LD 1 is an important and necessary step for Maine's response and management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through its support of telemedicine, expanded prescription supply, health insurance coverage for COVID-19 related illness and provision for COVID-19 vaccines, this legislation will help the state manage people's health during the pandemic and supports providers like PPNNE in meeting the health care needs of our patients.

I urge you to vote ought to pass for LD 1 and would be happy to answer any questions.