

May 5, 2021

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333
Re: LD1539, An Act to Provide Access to Fertility Care

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and the members of the HCIFS Committee:

My name is Mariah Pfeiffer, I am a Lewiston resident, and I urge you to support LD 1539.

This bill is of both personal and professional interest to me because I am a Registered Nurse working in labor and delivery and because I have a rare genetic disease called Hereditary Leiomyoma and Renal Cell Carcinoma (HLRCC). Among other things, HLRCC means that I have many uterine fibroids at an early age compared to other women and that I will require an early hysterectomy. The presence of rapidly growing uterine fibroids not only makes getting pregnant harder, it also limits the window of time I have in which to get pregnant. When I was diagnosed at age 31, the news catapulted me into the intense stress and pressure of having to think strategically not only about how important being a biological mother is to me, but also about the financial savvy required to save for the reality of surgeries and fertility treatments.

I was told when I was diagnosed that I should get pregnant as soon as possible to increase my chances of being able to have a pregnancy before my inevitable early hysterectomy. Unfortunately, life just doesn't work that way. Currently, I do not have a partner and am not sure that I want to have a pregnancy as a single woman. As each month ticks by, I worry increasingly not only about the ever-growing fibroids, but also about my fertility options. The reality that IVF and its associated costs will be a part of my journey into motherhood has changed how I approach my work, my thoughts on whether I even can be a biological mother, and my financial needs. In many ways, the financial worry has been life-limiting.

It was shortly after I decided to move back to Maine after years away that I was diagnosed with HLRCC. I love this state, but it is already hard enough to afford to live here while working as a nurse, let alone trying to save to finance IVF services and build a life. I have seriously considered moving back to my hometown in upstate NY because I know that many insurance plans cover IVF services there and would save me not only tens of thousands of dollars, but also reduce the emotional cost of financing an IVF pregnancy.

On a professional note, as a labor and delivery nurse who has worked in the field for the better part of a decade, I know firsthand that we need more babies and young families here in Maine. Our birth rates consistently lag behind the national average, and we depend on in-migration to maintain our population¹. I also know that very few people in this state have the privilege to be able to take advantage of IVF technology – both because there are only two clinics in the state (Bangor and South Portland) limiting geographic access, as well as the fact that in a state with a low median and average annual income, IVF is even more unaffordable here than elsewhere². Additionally, labor and delivery units across the state are at risk of closing in part because of our low birth rates, which in turn

¹ [Population Outlook to 2034.pdf \(maine.gov\)](#)

² [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Maine](#)

endangers the health of many Maine mothers who may need to travel further for basic obstetric care³. Finally, Maine is actively losing prospective young families who make the smart financial decision to move to a nearby state where IVF is covered. In fact, Maine is surrounded by states that offer this coverage – New Hampshire, New York, and Massachusetts all have IVF coverage⁴. However, I would prefer to build my life and my family here, and I know I'm not alone.

You have an opportunity to support the health of women in Maine as well as to provide for the future of our state. Please vote in favor of LD 1539. With this bill, you can make Maine a better, more affordable place to build families.

Sincerely,

Mariah Pfeiffer, RN

³http://rhrc.umn.edu/wp-content/files_mf/1491501904UMRHRCOBclosuresPolicyBrief.pdf; [Another small Maine hospital to stop delivering babies \(bangordailynews.com\)](#)

⁴ [Discover Infertility Treatment Coverage by U.S. State \(resolve.org\)](#)