



**Re: LD 2203 An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Federally Approved
Nonprescription Oral Hormonal Contraceptives**

February 20, 2024

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, my name is Gia Drew, and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. This testimony is on behalf of EqualityMaine.

We urge you to support LD 2203 - An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Federally Approved Nonprescription Oral Hormonal Contraceptives. We recognize that everyone has a fundamental right to sexual and bodily autonomy, which includes the right to decide whether or when to become a parent, protect ourselves from sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and to do so with dignity, free from violence and discrimination. All people, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and two-spirit (LGBTQ+), need access to sexual and reproductive health care. LGBTQ+ health issues and sexual and reproductive healthcare are inextricably linked, because they both involve individuals' autonomy in their most intimate decisions.

Unfortunately, the health care system in the United States has historically failed and largely continues to fail the LGBTQ+ community, as LGBTQ+ people experience major disparities in sexual and reproductive health care and worse health outcomes than the population overall.¹ These differences are due to a series of barriers in the healthcare system, including fragmentation of health services, a history of discrimination from providers and insurance companies, and the far reaching impact of poverty, all of which can be exacerbated by bias, racism, and intersecting oppressive identities.

¹<https://www.gutmacher.org/article/2020/11/not-debate-lgbtq-people-need-and-deserve-tailored-sexual-and-reproductive-health>

According to the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, LGBTQ+ students are three times as likely to report that they have been forced to have sexual contact than their non LGBTQ+ peers.² And according to the 2023 survey, more than 25% of Maine’s students say they’re LGBTQ+.³ In research published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, teenagers who are part of a sexual minority are at increased risk of teen pregnancy, with those who identify as bisexual having a nearly five fold increased risk of becoming pregnant.⁴ We also know that people who have unintended pregnancies are more likely to delay prenatal care, experience violence, and may experience mental health problems later in life. Likewise, children of people who have unintended pregnancies are at increased risk for mental and physical health problems and are more likely to struggle in school.⁵

Passing this bill would be helpful to so many people in Maine, especially to many members of the LGBTQ+ community, who find it a challenge to afford the rising cost of healthcare and/or who don't have regular access to a provider. LD 2203 provides a real opportunity to increase access to necessary healthcare and maintain access to birth control, an essential element of reproductive autonomy and personal freedom. We urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 2203.

Thank you,

Gia Drew (she/her)

Executive Director , EqualityMaine

²https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2017_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2017_Detailed_Report_s_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf

³https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023_Detailed_Report_s_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf

⁴<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5869338/>

⁵<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/family-planning/reduce-proportion-unintended-pregnancies-fp-01#:~:text=Summary,likely%20to%20struggle%20in%20school.>