



***Testimony in support of LD 265***

**An Act to Provide Women Access to Affordable Postpartum Care**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human 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 265.

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, 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.

We fully support this legislation because it would ensure that all our patients, regardless of their income, will be guaranteed continued health coverage for up to a year after childbirth. While sixty days is currently the standard under MaineCare for postpartum coverage, this time period is not nearly enough to protect the health and wellbeing of a new parent. There is never a good time to lose health coverage, and no individual at any time should have to experience loss of coverage because they passed an arbitrary deadline, not grounded in best medical practice. A newborn at two months, six months or ten months, still needs a healthy parent to care for them.

The current standard puts new parents at risk for postpartum complications and jeopardizes their health and ability to care for their family. Enacting this legislation would remove one source of stress for parents as they care for their newborn. Managing the increased expense of a newborn is enough for a family struggling financially. An unexpected medical bill or illness could cause serious harm to both the parent and the child. We shouldn't have to access a parent to choose between rent, diapers or prescription medications.

At Planned Parenthood, we see firsthand the stresses and pressures our patients face every day waiting for new insurance to kick-in or losing coverage from lost employment. Expanding coverage for postpartum care is a critical step forward for new parents in addressing the rising rates of maternal mortality across the United States. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), American women are fifty percent more likely to die in the period surrounding childbirth than their own mothers were, and these outcomes are disproportionately worse for people of color. Black women are dying from pregnancy-related complications at 2 to 6 times the rate of white women and a majority of these health issues are preventable with adequate access to care. These complications often occur because people, especially those who are low-income and living in rural communities, lack adequate access to prenatal and postpartum care. While Maine's rates of maternal deaths are lower compared to other states, it is important that based on these statistics, we continue to ensure postpartum care is provided for at least a year post-delivery and made accessible for all new parents.

LD 265 would ensure that postpartum and reproductive health care for those who depend upon MaineCare is something new parents can count on to maintain their health and the health of their family. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to vote to pass LD 265.