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April 16, 2021

Senator Ned Claxton  
Representative Michele Meyer  
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 718, “An Act To Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program and the Children’s Health Insurance Program”

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Health and Human Services:

Maine Family Planning provides comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care for adults and teens at 18 clinics statewide and serves as the non-profit administrator of Maine’s statewide family planning network, which encompasses roughly 50 providers, including federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) and school-based health centers. This robust network ensures that affordable care is available to more than 28,000 mostly low income patients each year.

As healthcare providers we know that access to quality, affordable, compassionate care is a basic human right, and should not be predicated on citizenship or immigration status. More specifically to reproductive health care, when an expectant parent who is undocumented or whose status is uncertain is ineligible for health insurance, they may not be able to access prenatal or even labor and delivery unless they experience a medical emergency. This is not only dangerous for the parent and child, it is a preventable cost to the healthcare system, and an avoidable strain on our community. Furthermore, a person who is undocumented or whose status is uncertain and lacks insurance coverage, may face significant barriers to comprehensive contraceptive counseling, sexually transmitted infection or STI treatment, or cancer screenings. Every person should have access to the education and tools they need to determine if and when to become pregnant. Ensuring these services to all Mainers, regardless of legal status, is part of a strong and effective public health system.

We all benefit when everyone in our community has access to comprehensive, quality healthcare. Maine voters agree; we resoundingly passed Medicaid expansion in 2017. We see LD 718 as continuing that work, to close coverage gaps for all Mainers. In the middle of this pandemic and recession, our collective safety and our economic recovery are tied to each person’s ability to get to the doctor or fill a prescription. Now is the time to ensure immigrants who call Maine home have access to life-saving health coverage.

Thank you for your time and attention to this legislation. I urge you to vote “ought to pass.”

Sincerely,

George A. Hill, President/CEO