



## Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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### Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese

Written testimony in opposition to **LD 811** –

An Act To Protect the Reproductive Rights and Freedoms of Maine People

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 811. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics\* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 55 parishes, it has 8 elementary schools, one private elementary school, one diocesan high school and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland advocates for enacting and enforcing laws that create safe communities and promote the common good. This issue is important to Catholics because as people of faith a primary concern is the moral and ethical considerations that should be at the root of our decision making. We all are created in God's image. We all—each of us--possess a basic human dignity. The Catholic Church teaches that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the underpinning of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundational principle of Catholic social teaching.

Catholics have considered universal health care a basic human right since the earliest of times. Jesus' ministry to the sick, injured and marginalized is foundational to our vocation of healing and establishing moral societies where all people are cared for. Christians understand their vocation not only to provide direct care to the sick and injured, but to advocate on their behalf to those responsible for the common good of society. Almost 100 years ago, the Catholic Bishops of the United States called for basic health care for all people and have consistently advocated for this ever since. The important thing to note about this unwavering support is that health care must be life-affirming, not life ending. I have lobbied for Medicaid expansion, and for other health care funding because health care is a basic human right. This bill funds abortion providers which negates a child's human right to live: The Diocese strongly objects to this bill.

Simply put: There is no need for additional funding for family planning. Here is the alternative already available: there are over 200 federally qualified health care centers in the state of Maine where Mainers can receive care.<sup>1</sup> This does not include the more than 745 hospital-based physician practices that must provide access to care without regard to ability to pay.

In 2019, a bill passed that forces taxpayers to fund abortions they find abhorrent. Hundreds of Mainers came to Augusta to voice their opposition to taxpayer funding of abortions. This imposed the abortion industry's views on all of us. Many abortion advocates now admit that abortion is the taking of a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/data/reports/datagrid?gridName=FQHCs>

human life – yet they would force those who oppose killing of the innocent to promote what even *they* admit is killing.<sup>2</sup> Nothing could be more intolerant.

This bill would further force objecting taxpayers to be involved in this injustice. I urge you to vote ought to not to pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

\*[www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/)

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<sup>2</sup> See M.E. Williams, “So what if abortion ends life?”, *Salon*, Jan. 23, 2013, [http://www.salon.com/2013/01/23/so\\_what\\_if\\_abortion\\_ends\\_life/](http://www.salon.com/2013/01/23/so_what_if_abortion_ends_life/); J. Schaeffer, “Abortion Provider: We Should Admit ‘It’s Violence, It’s a Person, It’s Killing’,” *Newsmax*, Nov. 2, 2015, <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/abortion-providers-violence-killing/2015/11/02/id/700238/>.