

TESTIMONY OF MEAGAN SWAY, ESQ.

LD 1478 – Ought To Pass

An Act to Improve Women’s Health and Economic Security by Funding Family Planning Services

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

April 19, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, greetings. My name is Meagan Sway, and I am the Policy Director at the ACLU of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, we urge you to support LD 1478 because it would increase the ability of people in Maine, particularly women, to access essential health care.

Reproductive health and access to affordable health care is an essential component of economic security, particularly for women. In order to take full advantage of the educational and career opportunities afforded to her, a woman must have control of her reproductive life. In a study conducted by researchers at the Guttmacher Institute, 63 percent of women surveyed indicated that contraception allowed them to take better care of themselves and their families; 56 percent indicated that it allowed them to support themselves financially; 51 percent said it allowed them to complete their education; and 50 percent said that contraception allowed them to keep or get a job.¹

Women with low incomes are in a particularly vulnerable situation. One in five women are not using their preferred method of contraception, and 25 percent say it is because they cannot afford it.² For example, researchers at the Texas Policy Evaluation Project

¹ Adam Sonfield, Kinsey Hasstedt, Megan L. Kavanaugh and Ragnar Anderson, *The Social and Economic Benefits of Women’s Ability To Determine Whether and When to Have Children*, Guttmacher Institute, March 2013, available at

<https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/social-economic-benefits.pdf>.

² Brittni Frederiksen, Usha Ranji, Alina Salganicoff, Michelle Long, *Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Health Services: Key Findings from the 2020 KFF Women’s Health*

performed a study of 800 women in Austin and El Paso, Texas, who had recently given birth to a child. They found that though about a third wanted to be using long-acting reversible contraception, only about 13 percent were. The most significant predictor of whether a woman was able to get long-acting reversible contraception was whether her family made at least \$75,000 per year.³

Access to family planning services is crucial to economic self-determination and an ability to fully participate in a democratic society for those who might become pregnant. Yet Maine has seen funding for family planning services stagnant for the past decade. With inflation and rising costs, this means that access to reproductive health care is less available, with some clinics only able to open one day a week. This committee has the opportunity to rectify this by passing increased funding for reproductive health care services in our state.

Passing LD 1478 is crucial for anyone who could become pregnant, but especially the many women in our state with low incomes. This legislation will extend opportunity to the most vulnerable Maine women. It will give them the chance to plan their educational and professional lives. It will allow them to better care for the children they already have. And it will allow them to better prevent and manage chronic diseases. It is because of these reasons that we ask you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1478. Thank you for your attention.

Survey, Kaiser Family Foundation, April 21, 2021, available at <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/womens-sexual-and-reproductive-health-services-key-findings-from-the-2020-kff-womens-health-survey/>.

³ Olga Khazan, Why Some Women Still Can't Get Birth Control, The Atlantic, Nov. 2, 2016, available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/11/contraceptive-deserts/505577/>.