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Testimony of the Department of Health and Human Services
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services

In Support of LD 820, An Act To Prevent Discrimination in Public and Private Insurance
Coverage for Pregnant Women in Maine

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Senator Sanborn, Rep. Tepler, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, my name is Molly Bogart and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) strongly supports LD 820, An Act To Prevent Discrimination in Public and Private Insurance Coverage for Pregnant Women in Maine, and we applaud the work of the sponsors to ensure equitable access to abortion care for Maine people. This bill would require health insurance carriers that provide maternity services to also cover abortion care services and requires DHHS to cover abortion care for MaineCare members.

Access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care is integral to a person's physical, mental, and economic well-being. We believe that every person in Maine has the right to make their own personal medical decisions and access sexual and reproductive health care when and where they need it. It is critical that everyone in this state has access to affordable, high-quality health care, including reproductive services – and that they can obtain them free from harassment, intimidation, and undue barriers to services.

The Commissioner is currently the defendant in the lawsuit, *Mabel Wadsworth et al. v. Lambrew*, whereby providers of abortion care services are seeking a court order requiring the State to provide abortion coverage for eligible MaineCare members. This case was initially filed in 2015 and is currently pending before the Maine Supreme Court. Oral arguments were held nearly a year ago on May 16, 2018. As litigation of this case has been prolonged and the Court's recent requests for additional information will further extend the expected date of decision, it has become apparent that that this legislative solution would bring clarity to the issues at hand and ensure that individuals receiving MaineCare have equal access to has abortion care.

As Federal funds may not currently be used for abortion care, coverage of these services for MaineCare members would have to be state funded.

We appreciate the opportunity to support LD 820, and look forward to answering any questions that the Committee may have.