

Good afternoon Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee. My name is Nicky Mathieu and I live in Hallowell, Maine and have worked at Maine Family Planning for 20 years. I am the person on the other end of the phone when people call with questions about abortion, and to schedule their appointment. I am an expert in knowing what Mainers do to pay for their abortions.

At my job, I speak with Mainers every single day from all walks of life who need abortions. This includes those with Mainecare, private health insurance, and no insurance at all.

Across this range of people, the number one question I'm asked is: "How much will this cost?" My answer: "It's \$500 unless you have insurance that covers abortion."

It is rare that anyone hears that amount and says, "No problem, I'd like your next available appointment". But it's the people with Mainecare who are especially blindsided and unprepared to produce that fee in the limited time available.

So after I tell them \$500, I pause and listen for their reaction. I hear a gasp, I get a panicked "Are you SERIOUS?!", I hear sniffles through tears, or a defeated sigh, and sometimes, a hang up.

They may say, "But I do have health insurance: I have Mainecare!" "I'm sorry." I tell them. "Mainecare excludes abortion services except in rare cases."

So next comes more questions, and bargaining.

"How many weeks from now can I still have this done? I'll need a couple more paychecks to save up."

"If I can get my aunt to call and pay for me, do you have to tell her it's for an abortion?"

"Who am I supposed to ask for help? No one else I know has this much money, either."

"Can I make a payment plan? I could pay a little bit each month or so; I just don't have it all now."

"How could I withdraw that amount from our bank account? He controls the money; I don't have any of my own."

"My coworkers are already suspicious because I've been so sick, and everyone gossips there. If I ask to pick up extra shifts, they'll want to know what's going on, and I really want to keep this private."

"I have \$40 in my bank account, and that's supposed to last me through the end of the month. I have kids at home who need to eat." "I've been staying on people's couches for the past couple months. I can't ask anyone for anything else."

"I'll ask my landlord if I can pay my rent late - again."

"I'll see if I have anything to sell at a pawn shop."

"I'll try to return some of my kids' Christmas gifts."

And then there are the no-shows. Sometimes, they call a few days or weeks later to say they didn't come because they didn't have the money in time for their appointment. They're wondering if it's too late, if they can reschedule. Sometimes, we can still see them. Sometimes, we can't.

I've spoken with hundreds of people over the years, most likely thousands, but I'm only able to share with you quotes of those who called in the first place. I cannot speak for those who heard from a friend what the cost was, or saw it on our website and felt that \$500 meant this would never be an option for them, and didn't call at all.

I urge you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 820, which I am convinced will be the deciding factor for countless Mainers, as they struggle to do what's best for themselves and their families.

Thank you for your consideration.