



## 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 1613 –**  
**An Act to Ensure Access to Women’s Health and Economic Security**

Senator Sanborn and Representative Tepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in its opposition to LD 1613. 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. However – this is NOT health-care. This bill negates a child’s human right to live: The Diocese strongly objects to this bill.

Simply put: Abortion funding restrictions save lives. Maine Family Planning is asking for reimbursement and ongoing funding of over \$2 million Maine tax dollars a year due to its refusal to comply with the “Protect Life Rule.”<sup>1</sup> The “Protect Life Rule,” proposes regulations similar to the “Reagan rules” that were upheld by the Supreme Court in 1991 in *Rust v. Sullivan*. These new regulations require physical and financial separation between Title X recipients and abortion providers. Under these new regulations, abortion centers cannot serve as Title X family planning centers and recipients cannot refer for abortion. Grantees must comply with state/local abuse reporting requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/maine-clinic-forfeited-title-x-funding-to-keep-providing-abortions-2019-8>

The authors of Title X explicitly stated that the program was only to provide pre-pregnancy services and abortion was not a legitimate part of family planning.<sup>2</sup> This is not an interpretation, this is in the law.

The Supreme Court has stated that the government can favor birth over abortion. In this rule all the government is doing is separating abortion back out of its family planning services – well within its rights and logical to its goal of getting more people to use these services to prevent pregnancy and decrease the abortion rate. It is inconsistent for the federal government to insist, on the one hand, that its money not be used to provide abortion services (as this and all other Federal programs do) while, on the other hand, permitting programs that receive federal money to engage in full-scale abortion advocacy in the same surroundings, ushering clients from one “service” to another, and mandating a referral for a procedure to which the government has already stated its objections.

REMEMBER: Six in ten Americans oppose taxpayer funding of abortion.<sup>3</sup>

Forcing taxpayers to fund abortions they find abhorrent imposes the abortion industry’s views on all of us. Many abortion advocates now admit that abortion is the taking of a human life – yet they would force those who oppose killing of the innocent to promote what even *they* admit is killing.<sup>4</sup> Nothing could be more intolerant. By contrast, laws like the Protect Life Rule, leave everyone, *including* those who want to pay for other people’s abortions, free to act on their own convictions.

This bill would force objecting taxpayers to be involved in this injustice. The Protect Life rule and similar laws do not fully protect the unborn; but they protect all of us from being forced to treat abortion as a positive good for women and society. 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> In addition to the prohibition itself, the accompanying Conference report declares: “It is, and has been, the intent of both Houses that the funds authorized under this legislation be used only to support preventive family planning services, population research, infertility services, and other related medical, informational, and educational activities. The conferees have adopted the language contained in section 1008, which prohibits the use of such funds for abortion, in order to make clear this intent.”

<sup>3</sup> Marist Poll, 2018. <https://www.kofc.org/un/en/resources/communications/abortion-limits-favored.pdf>

<sup>4</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/>.