



SUIT UP MAINE

Testimony in support of LD 1613, An Act Regarding Women's Health and Economic Security
February 13, 2020

Sen. Sanborn, Rep. Tepler and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance And Financial Services Committee:

My name is Kelli Whitlock Burton and I am co-leader of Suit Up Maine, an all-volunteer, statewide progressive action group of around 5,000 people in all 16 counties. I offer this testimony in support of LD 1613.

Like many people I know, there was a time in my life when I was uninsured and struggled to make ends meet. Luckily, I was able to turn to my local family planning center for health care. Affordable and accessible health care is critical to Mainers all across the state, including the 23,000 people who rely on the network of 50 health centers that make up Maine's Family Planning System. These centers in Maine provide cancer screenings, birth control, disease testing and treatment, and other reproductive and sexual health care, serving low-income people, members of the LGBTQ community, and the uninsured. For decades, the cost of these services were largely covered through the federal Title X family planning program. But last year, the federal government implemented a new rule that sought to limit the treatment and medical guidance clinicians at Title X-funded centers can offer patients.¹ Family planning centers in Maine and across the country were faced with a painful choice: compromise patient care or withdraw from the program and lose millions in funding. It was no choice, really. These centers are built on a commitment to providing care to their patients, many of whom have nowhere else to go. Compromising that care was not an option. Withdrawing from the program was the best way to protect patient care, but it came at a steep cost. Maine's family planning network has lost \$2 million in funding as a result of their decision to put patients ahead of politics.

Every Mainer should have access to comprehensive, quality, affordable, accessible health care, regardless of their income or where they live. With LD 1613, the state has an opportunity to ensure that Maine's family planning system will continue to serve those who need it most. Studies show that Maine's publicly funded family planning centers help prevent 5,400 unplanned pregnancies each year and have helped Maine achieve one of the lowest teen pregnancy rates in the U.S.^{2,3} Other research suggests that investment in family planning also reduces Maine's overall health care costs.⁴

I urge the committee to support this vital service in Maine and vote Ought to Pass.

¹ "New Title X Regulations: Implications for Women and Family Planning Providers," Kaiser Family Foundation, March 8, 2019.

<https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/new-title-x-regulations-implications-for-women-and-family-planning-providers/>

² Guttmacher Institute, <https://data.guttmacher.org/states/table?state=ME&topics=100+117&dataset=data>

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/facts-and-stats/national-and-state-data-sheets/adolescent-reproductive-health/maine/index.html>

⁴ Guttmacher Institute, <https://data.guttmacher.org/states/table?state=ME&topics=100&dataset=data>