Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and distinguished members of the committee,

My name is Chandler Blodgett, Ambulatory Care Services Manager at Pen Bay Medical Center; I’m a native to Maine and have practiced community pharmacy in the Midcoast for 10 years. I am here to testify in qualified support of LD 351, “An Act to Increase Access to Birth Control by Making Certain Contraception Available over the Counter” on behalf of MaineHealth.

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. As part of our mission of “Working Together So Maine’s Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth strongly supports increasing access to affordable – and lifesaving – health care and medications. In fact, MaineHealth has established a policy to provide Free Care to all patients with incomes at or below 200% of the poverty level. Additionally, MaineHealth’s MedAccess program helps patients with limited resources acquire prescription drugs that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

At least 20 states allow pharmacists to prescribe or directly dispense hormonal contraceptives, and we hope that Maine will join their ranks. While we are supportive of the intent of LD 351 to increase access to hormonal contraceptives, we would urge the committee to consider the following suggestions:

With regards to access, we recommend removing the broad requirement for evidence of a prior prescription as this can be a barrier to access. We also recommend authorizing pharmacists to prescribe self-administered hormonal contraceptives to include vaginal rings and depot medroxyprogesterone acetate. These recommendations are consistent with other states legislation to safely reduce barriers to seeking contraceptives, and are aligned with the positions of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association.

With regards to implementation, we recommend allowing appointment scheduling with a pharmacist. Pharmacists have always been an integral part of the care team, but since the start of the pandemic, pharmacists have been asked to do more than ever before. If a patient can schedule an appointment with a pharmacist, it will allow for uninterrupted time with the patient and, ultimately, result in better patient care. We urge the Committee to consider reimbursement for the services provided by the pharmacist. We would suggest that the Committee look to other states, like New Hampshire, that provides coverage for outpatient contraceptive services under the same terms and conditions as for other outpatient services.

Pharmacists are one of the most accessible healthcare providers and are an important resource for expanding access to care. We are happy to work with the Committee on LD 351 in any way we can to increase access to hormonal contraceptives.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.