Testimony of Dr. Jamie Fey, MaineHealth
In Support of LD 615, “An Act to Ensure Access to Newly Born Male Infant Circumcision by Requiring MaineCare and Health Insurance Coverage”
Thursday, March 23, 2023

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am Dr. Jamie Fey, pediatric hospitalist at Maine Medical Center, and I am here to testify in strong support of LD 615, “An Act to Ensure Access to Newly Born Male Infant Circumcision by Requiring MaineCare and Health Insurance Coverage.”

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a continuum of health care services to communities throughout Maine and New Hampshire. Every day, our over 22,000 care team members support our vision of “Working Together so Our Communities are the Healthiest in America” by providing a range of services from primary and specialty physician services to a continuum of behavioral health care services, community and tertiary hospital care, home health care and a lab.

As you have heard from the sponsor, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated its policy statement on newborn male circumcision in 2012 to say that “…the benefits of circumcision are sufficient to justify access to this procedure for families choosing it and to warrant third-party payment for circumcision of male newborns.”

Of the newborn male circumcisions performed within a MaineHealth hospital, less than 2% were covered by the family’s insurance. And the average cost of $450 is not insignificant. Inconsistent insurance coverage in Maine has led to inconsistent access to this procedure for families. At Maine Medical Center, it has created a tiered system where some families are able to pay for the procedure (although not without significant financial hardship in some cases) and others who wish to have it performed are unable to access it at all due to cost considerations.

LD 615 mandates that insurance carriers cover newborn male circumcision should a family choose it. A separate bill will address MaineCare coverage. If circumcision is the right choice for a family, the cost shouldn’t be a barrier to accessing the procedure and its health benefits.

Specific benefits identified included prevention of urinary tract infections,
penile cancer, and transmission of some sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. It also prevents complications associated with having a foreskin including inflammation and infection of the foreskin, phimosis and paraphimosis, which is a urologic emergency and can have catastrophic consequences.

In my practice, I have cared for patients who have suffered with illnesses that could have been prevented by circumcision. I regularly care for small infants with urinary tract infection, the management of which includes invasive testing, prolonged intravenous antibiotics, and long hospitalizations. I have also seen patients with uncomfortable infections or penile injuries related to paraphimosis. Ensuring that access to this procedure is equitable would allow these families to have a choice to access the benefits of circumcision and in some cases will help them avoid preventable suffering and injury.

For those reasons, I urge you to support the legislation before you today. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.