

Amber Hathaway
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LD 1619

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to give testimony regarding the proposed LD 1619 Act to Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Act. My name is Amber Hathaway, I use she/her pronouns, and I'm a Mainer currently residing in Orono. Although my doctorate is in physics, as an undergraduate I completed a minor in Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy as well as a second major in Women's Studies. Abortion is an issue I have studied extensively both inside and outside the classroom, and I hope that my perspective will be useful to you when considering the proposed legislation.

The decision to obtain an abortion, like the choice to obtain any other medical procedure, is a deeply personal one. There are myriad reasons why someone may need an abortion later in pregnancy, such as discovering a change in fetal development that is incompatible with life. Other common reasons include lack of awareness of the pregnancy until later, a controlling partner who won't permit an abortion, and lack of access to resources to obtain an abortion earlier during the pregnancy. Ultimately, though, individual motives aren't what matters. What matters is that some Mainers are being denied access to necessary medical care in state, treated as less than full persons under the law as it stands.

While the original Reproductive Privacy Act provided a much-needed foundation to help ensure that Mainers are able to receive the reproductive healthcare they need, current law relies on the concept of viability, an ambiguous and unscientific notion. By imposing gestational limits, the State of Maine has divided pregnant people into categories: those who are worthy of reproductive autonomy and those who are not. A person does not lose their humanity when they pass a certain gestational stage, and it is time we update our laws to ensure that all Mainers are afforded the same respect and dignity, regardless of their pregnancy status.

This is doubly important because, outside of pregnancy, bodily autonomy is a right held sacred by the United States legal system at-large as well as the state of Maine. For example, legal precedent (e.g., *McFall v. Shrimp*) has established that one person cannot be compelled to donate bone marrow to another, even if the second person will die without the transplant. Bone marrow donation is an invasive procedure, but pregnancy is even more invasive. Yet, under current Maine law, a person who is farther along in their pregnancy must continue to endure all of the physical and emotional burdens of pregnancy unless they can find the means to travel to one of the few out-of-state clinics in which later abortions are performed.

Governor Mills's proposal would align Maine's reproductive healthcare laws with legal precedent around other healthcare procedures. It would help to ensure that pregnant people are treated as full persons, with the same rights to autonomy and self-determination as everyone else. It places the decisionmaking where it belongs, in the hands of the pregnant person, with guidance from their medical team. This is why I ask that you support LD 1619 Act to Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.