



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

510 Ocean Avenue
Portland Maine 04103-4936

Telephone: (207) 773-6471
Facsimile: (207) 773-0182

Suzanne C. Lafreniere, JD
Office of Public Policy

Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese

Written testimony in opposition to 1619 –

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 1619. 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 48 parishes, it has nine 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. Within the diocese, there are also seven subsidized housing units, four rehabilitation and residence facilities, and two child-care centers. There are three Catholic hospitals operating independently of the diocese as well as Catholic Charities Maine, the state's largest social service agency, which operates as a separate corporation.

It comes as no surprise to any legislator or any member of the public that the Diocese of Portland vehemently opposes this law. Respect for unborn human life is the foundation of the Church's constant social teaching and social justice ministries.

However, there are numerous reasons why LD 1619 is an unprecedented attack on life. LD 1619 would permit abortion with no restrictions through all nine months of pregnancy. It goes far beyond allowing “medically necessary,” post-viability abortions.

Maine law already allows unlimited abortion before an unborn child attains viability (subject to informed consent and adult involvement requirements)¹. LD 1619 extends that unlimited availability to dangerous post-viability abortions.

I have been asked this question hundreds of times since Gov. Mills announced her plans to change Maine's law: Why would such a law be needed? Gov. Mills stated, “The legislation is inspired by the story of Yarmouth resident Dana Peirce, who had to seek an abortion out-of-state after she discovered her child was suffering from a deadly form of skeletal dysplasia, a random, rare genetic mutation.” Based on a memo from the Attorney General's office in 2022, fatal fetal diagnosis are already covered by Maine law.¹ This tragic story about baby Cameron is not fixed if LD 1619 was already the law in Maine.

It is important to note that according to Planned Parenthood New England, Maine's current viability standard is not a red-line rule. Dr. Andrea Pelletier, the medical director of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, said in a Maine Public Broadcasting News article in 2022 that “viability is a gray zone and it depends on the conditions of each pregnancy.” “You can't just pull up a website and say, 'Maine does abortions until a certain number of weeks,'" Pelletier said. “It gives us some flexibility in

¹ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/stds-birth-control-pregnancy/parental-consent-and-notification-laws> - N.B. There is NO parental consent required according to Planned Parenthood's website.

what we can offer patients, but it also does provide some restrictions." ⁱⁱ It is also noteworthy that according to that article, there are no providers in Maine to perform complex, late term abortions.

Current Maine law is broad and expansive. In Maine, one does not need to be a doctor to perform an abortion; one does not need to have an ultrasound; abortion clinics are not required to have safety inspections; taxpayers are forced to pay for abortions; providers are not required to have admitting privileges at a hospital, in case something goes wrong; and there is no wait period.

There are numerous other abortion related bills which will be heard and voted on this session. Taken in complement with each other, Maine will be a destination state for abortions. What a tragedy this would be. Maine is the way life Should be.

Please vote LD 1619 as Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/

ⁱ <https://www.maine.gov/ag/docs/Abortion%20Rights%20in%20Maine.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.mainepublic.org/health/2022-10-17/a-15-week-abortion-ban-would-have-overlooked-these-maine-mothers-pregnancy-complications>