

May 01, 2023

In Regards to: LD1619

Written Testimony

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Stephen Sharrow and I am writing today in opposition to LD1619, a bill that as you know aims to extend the legality of abortion from viability to anytime prior to birth.

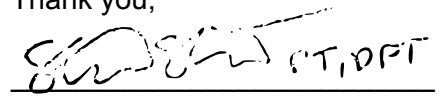
I was born, and have lived in Maine my entire life. It is a wonderful state, full of beautiful opportunities for those of all ages to take advantage of, if given the chance. I am blessed to work as a physical therapist in five of our state's school districts. I spend five days a week interacting with amazing and awe-inspiring children and young adults who have overcome diagnoses and limits that have been put on their lives by others, and who bravely face each day with an attitude that challenges all obstacles in their way.

To be a part of the network of providers, teachers, ed techs, nurses, and administration that come together to support these children is truly a blessing. Perhaps the largest blessing of all is the effect that the insight, curiosity, and wonder of each of these children has on each of their supporting staff members. There are certainly challenging days where poor sleep, attitudes, and behaviors affect their mood like anyone else, but when you see these in light of the challenges they are up against every day, these moments pale in comparison to the enormous strides these children make week to week, month to month, and year to year.

I bring these children up because many of them would, and likely did test positive for genetic conditions and fetal abnormalities, while still in their mother's wombs. Many of their parents are told that the likelihood of them ever surviving to a certain age, or demonstrating meaningful interaction is very low. It makes me sad to think that any of them could have been robbed of the opportunity to share in the smiles, giggles, tears, love, and oftentimes underestimated progress that they demonstrate. To have their life taken away, before ever being given a chance to impact those around them, in the way God intended them to, would be an overwhelming disservice to their friends, families, staff, and this state.

I ask you to take this opportunity to oppose LD1619 and the likelihood that many of these children are terminated based on someone else's trusted, but certainly not omniscient medical opinion. I would urge you to instead support lifegiving efforts from many of our state's wonderful programs that come alongside struggling families and parents to share in the difficult burden of raising a child who, despite their level of need, has every right to be here. In a time where support for those who are unable to speak up for, or defend themselves has become so important, don't overlook these amazingly resilient children who are waiting to face challenges as they come, day in and day out, just like the rest of us.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SS' followed by a stylized flourish and the letters 'PT, DPT'. The signature is written above a horizontal line.

Stephen Sharrow, PT, DPT