

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Barbara Cray of Westport Island and I hereby submit written testimony in support of LD 1619, "An Act to Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Laws."

I am unable to present live testimony in support of this very important bill due to longstanding travel plans. However, I enthusiastically join with my friends at Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights in support of this update to Maine's reproductive privacy laws.

LD 1619 rightly takes the government out of the position of being able to dictate to women what choices they can make regarding their own pregnancies. Despite the regressive actions of the United States Supreme Court and many states governed by conservative Republicans, we cannot go back to the times when the reproductive rights of women were based upon their historical status as having no rights, based on the system of coverture which controlled the legal status of a married woman and considered her to be under her husband's protection and authority, based on the denial of property rights to women, based on women having no legal say over their own their children, and based on women being unable to attend college or pursue a profession. In short, when women were considered incapable of independent thought.

This was the state of affairs for the women of the United States just over one hundred years ago, and vestiges of it continue today, particularly as it relates to the rights of women to make their own reproductive decisions. It is quite frankly a chauvinistic culture that is largely responsible for the restrictions on women and their reproductive decisions that existed hundreds of years ago and still today. And although simplistic, it is not unfair to observe that current religious objections to abortion have an historical basis in paternalistic religious orders denying rights to women. Yes, some resist change. And this resistance to change is the source of conflict in our current society. But historic beliefs that no longer have any basis in science or in truth or in human rights must not be allowed to prevent the change we need to go into effect to give women their civil and human rights.

I am disturbed when opponents of this bill resort to arguments that urge that giving women the right to control their own reproductive decisions is "abortion on demand" and that it will allow women to seek an abortion up until the date of birth. These arguments in fact demonstrate the beliefs of those who assert them that a

woman is to be distrusted and dehumanized, and so must be subject to unfair laws. The facts are that the vast majority of abortions occur in the first trimester. And more importantly, a woman who has so far maintained her pregnancy into her third trimester is simply not going to arbitrarily end the pregnancy as these opponents assert. Rather, there must have been some dire and unexpected circumstances that have led to such a necessary and heartbreaking decision.

I saw a bumper sticker for sale at Gulf of Maine Books in Brunswick a few weeks back, which I purchased, because it so resonated for me. It says, simply, "Trust Women." Those who want to deprive women of their reproductive rights evidence a refusal to trust women. To trust a person is to believe in their reliability, truth, and abilities. Refusing to vote to enact LD 1619 means that those refusers do not find women reliable, truthful or able. I ask those of you who are considering voting against LD 1619 this: Do you truly not consider your wife, your sister, your daughter, your granddaughter, reliable, truthful and able?

Trust Women. Please vote in favor of LD 1619.