

Testimony In Favor of LD 1619, An Act to Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Laws

May 1, 2023

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and the honorable members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Stephanie Sienkiewicz. I am a resident of Augusta and I serve as an At-Large City Councilor there. I'm writing today in strong support of LD 1619, An Act to Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Laws.

Maine has a long history of protecting reproductive healthcare, the choices included in that healthcare, and the privacy necessary around those choices. As we have witnessed over the past year, however, we cannot rest in the pursuit of reproductive freedom and choice. This fight is long and ongoing. The actions taken in LD 1619 will further protect equal reproductive rights and the lives of Maine's citizens who can become pregnant.

Given the legislative climate around the country, changing the reporting around abortion statistics to protect the privacy of the patient is not only smart, it is necessary. We have seen states overreach their borders and attempt to legislate who can leave their state to access reproductive care; acts like LD 1619 make that overreach more difficult (1). Additionally, it should always be our goal to only collect that healthcare data which is necessary and sufficient to provide data for research, nothing more, in the balance of learning and privacy. This act helps to amend an error that tipped the scales away from privacy without a similar benefit to learning - names are not necessary to gain useful information from healthcare data.

Changing the language around abortions performed after viability is another necessary change. Maine's laws are sensitive to the complex ethical concerns around post-viability abortions, as they should be. The strict language currently in the law, however, could lead to situations like we have seen in Texas, in which pregnant people must be septic or hemorrhaging before they legally fall under the clause to protect "the life or health of the mother" (2). Trusting this judgment to healthcare professionals, who are sworn to do no harm and are liable to their ethics boards, allows for care that is nuanced, swift, and particular to the individual patient.

As a Maine citizen, I applaud these changes - they are logical and beneficial. As a person who has birthed two humans and is now their mother, I thank you. Since the Dobbs decision last year, I have imagined myself in situations in which I am carrying a pregnancy that threatens my life or health. I have imagined the terrible decision making I would have to engage in: weighing my health concerns, the desire for the pregnancy, and my love for and responsibilities to my two born children against one another. Most abortions are performed on women who already have

children - this is not a far-fetched hypothetical scenario (3). On bad days, I imagine having to do those calculations while living in a state that has restricted my right to do so. On my worst days, I imagine my children facing similar choices in a future in which their rights have been chipped away. I am deeply grateful to live in a state in which my reproductive care is available, protected, and actively enshrined in law by legislators who trust me and my healthcare providers to make decisions that are right for me and my family. You are doing difficult, necessary work. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Sienkiewicz
Augusta

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/anafaguy/2023/04/06/idaho-becomes-first-state-to-restrict-interstate-travel-for-abortion/?sh=b8656256c504>
2. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/16/health/abortion-texas-sepsis/index.html>
3. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna22689931>

Stephanie Sienkiewicz
Augusta
LD 1619

Testimony In Favor of LD 1619, An Act to Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Laws

May 1, 2023

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and the honorable members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Stephanie Sienkiewicz. I am a resident of Augusta and I serve as an At-Large City Councilor there. I'm writing today in strong support of LD 1619, An Act to Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Laws.

Maine has a long history of protecting reproductive healthcare, the choices included in that healthcare, and the privacy necessary around those choices. As we have witnessed over the past year, however, we cannot rest in the pursuit of reproductive freedom and choice. This fight is long and ongoing. The actions taken in LD 1619 will further protect equal reproductive rights and the lives of Maine's citizens who can become pregnant.

Given the legislative climate around the country, changing the reporting around abortion statistics to protect the privacy of the patient is not only smart, it is necessary. We have seen states overreach their borders and attempt to legislate who can leave their state to access reproductive care; acts like LD 1619 make that overreach more difficult (1). Additionally, it should always be our goal to only collect that healthcare data which is necessary and sufficient to provide data for research, nothing more, in the balance of learning and privacy. This act helps to amend an error that tipped the scales away from privacy without a similar benefit to learning - names are not necessary to gain useful information from healthcare data.

Changing the language around abortions performed after viability is another necessary change. Maine's laws are sensitive to the complex ethical concerns around post-viability abortions, as they should be. The strict language currently in the law, however, could lead to situations like we have seen in Texas, in which pregnant people must be septic or hemorrhaging before they legally fall under the clause to protect "the life or health of the mother" (2). Trusting this judgment to healthcare professionals, who are sworn to do no harm and are liable to their ethics boards, allows for care that is nuanced, swift, and particular to the individual patient.

As a Maine citizen, I applaud these changes - they are logical and beneficial. As a person who has birthed two humans and is now their mother, I thank you. Since the Dobbs decision last year, I have imagined myself in situations in which I am carrying a pregnancy that threatens my life or health. I have imagined the terrible decision making I would have to engage in: weighing my health concerns, the desire for the pregnancy, and my love for and responsibilities to my two born children against one another. Most abortions are performed on women who already have children - this is not a far-fetched hypothetical scenario (3). On bad days, I imagine having to do those calculations while living in a state that has restricted my right to do so. On my worst days, I imagine my children facing similar choices in a future in which their rights have been chipped away. I am deeply grateful to live in a state in which my reproductive care is available, protected, and actively enshrined in law by legislators who trust me and my healthcare providers to make decisions that are right for me and my family. You are doing difficult, necessary work. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Sienkiewicz
Augusta

1.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/anafaguy/2023/04/06/idaho-becomes-first-state-to-restrict-interstate-travel-for-abortion/?sh=b8656256c504>

2. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/16/health/abortion-texas-sepsis/index.html>
3. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna22689931>