



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

May 4, 2023

The Honorable Senator Anne Carney
The Honorable Representative Matt Moonen
Chairpersons, Joint Judiciary Committee
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: OPPOSE LD 614, Letter of Opposition from American Atheists regarding legislation that inserts politicians' religious views in patients' medical care

Dear Chairperson Carney, Chairperson Moonen, and Members of the Joint Judiciary Committee:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in Maine, writes in opposition to LD 614, a controversial bill that puts politicians between patients and the doctors who provide their care. We agree that pregnant people need timely, unbiased, and medically accurate information about the full range of reproductive options available to make the best choices about their health and well-being. However, seeking to prevent abortion via deceptive means undermines informed consent. We strongly urge you to oppose this harmful legislation.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation’s communities and where casual bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. As advocates for the health, safety, and well-being of all Americans, American Atheists objects to efforts to subordinate medical care to the religious beliefs of politicians and others.

LD 614 would require patients seeking abortions to receive an ultrasound before care is rendered. This bill further requires medical providers to show the patient images of the ultrasound as well as describe a “medical description” of the images, including the dimensions of the fetus and any internal or external organs. Informed consent is an essential aspect of health care, however trying to convince a pregnant person to change their mind about an abortion by requiring an ultrasound is a deceptive practice cloaked as informed consent. Polls consistently show that more than 6 in 10 Americans support legal access to abortion.¹ In Maine, the Pew Research Center reports that 64% of adults believe that abortion should be available in all or

¹ Pew Research Center. (2019). Public Opinion on Abortion, 1995-2019. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/public-opinion-on-abortion/>.

most cases.² Despite this widespread support, Maine lawmakers continue to introduce measure after measure to impose burdens on women seeking abortions. These requirements are not about informed consent or protecting women's health and well-being. They are about imposing a religious agenda on everyone else.

Politicians have no place in the private lives of patients. Patients faced with difficult decisions need to have the ability to decide the type of compassionate care that is best for their family and their beliefs, just as they would be allowed to do at any other point in their child's life. Every day, people across our country face the deeply personal decision of whether to continue their pregnancies. Certain circumstances are different -- some with a healthy desired pregnancy, some with a pregnancy that is unplanned, and some with severe health conditions that modern medicine cannot fix. Politicians should acknowledge the complexities of medical decisions and respect the autonomy of pregnant people and their families to make the decision that is morally and medically best for themselves, their family, and their beliefs.

Attempting to change the minds of pregnant people to force others to give birth against their will is wrong. Maine lawmakers should be working to dismantle the legal barriers and obstacles that shame patients and keep them away from abortion care earlier in pregnancies, instead of finding new ways to impose their beliefs on women. We strongly oppose LD 614 because they needlessly impose politicians' religious views into the private lives of pregnant people and the doctors who care for them. We urge you to reject this harmful bill. If you should have any questions regarding American Atheists' opposition to LD 614, please contact me by email at bwilliams@atheists.org.

Sincerely,



Brittany Williams
State Policy Counsel
American Atheists

² Pew Research Center. (2020). Do state laws on abortion reflect public opinion? Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/01/21/do-state-laws-on-abortion-reflect-public-opinion/>.