

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Ashley Bliss, and I live in Kittery. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 780.

I worked for years in sexual and reproductive health as both a healthcare worker and an administrator, and I am currently a JD candidate at Maine Law in Portland.

It is my experience as a healthcare administrator that I want to talk about today. The Maine hospital system contributes billions of dollars into Maine's economy, and the scaffolding of our healthcare delivery system is interlocking. If one sector becomes too rickety, there are major stability consequences for the other subsequent sectors. We watched, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, as healthcare worker shortages threatened the stability of hospital systems across the US. And now we are watching the out-migration of physicians and talented healthcare workers from hospital systems in states with abortion bans, and we are watching their healthcare delivery sectors become shakier as a result. Because of this, these states are experiencing economic hits as they continue to strip away protections for their most vulnerable citizens.

Maine is not currently considering an abortion ban. But it is critical to consider the possibility of abortion bans at the threshold of every future election cycle, and the likely result of such a ban. The pressure of political opposition to reproductive healthcare services, and abortion in specific, puts the stability of our interlocking healthcare system into constant jeopardy in the absence of a firm constitutional protection. Every election cycle becomes a chance at losing protections for reproductive healthcare. And therefore, every election cycle represents a threat to the stability of Maine's healthcare system, the stability of our economy, and the safety of pregnant and parenting Mainers. In fact, we can see this in action by observing the changes to the economies of Texas and Idaho since enacting their abortion bans. In both states, millions of dollars are lost each year from the effects of banning abortion and criminalizing providers. Entire OB-GYN wings of hospitals are closing due to provider out-migration. The obvious further effect of this is that women of child-bearing age are leaving these states for states where the full suite of OB-GYN care is protected, and where pregnancy is a much safer, and more stable, option. Maine is the oldest state in the US. We cannot sustain the economic damage of the loss of talented physicians from our state, the resultant instability to our healthcare delivery system, or the loss of young Mainers to other states.

It is the responsibility of our legislative leaders to provide systems of stability for Maine's economy. A constitutional amendment protecting reproductive autonomy is the right choice, and will protect Mainers and our economic futures against the ever-changing priorities of polarizing political tides. Thank you.

For further reading:

"The Economics of Abortion Bans" Asha Banerjee, *Economic Policy Institute*, January 18, 2023: <https://www.epi.org/publication/economics-of-abortion-bans/#:~:text=In%20many%20cases%2C%20abortion%20restrictions,ANSIRH%202022%3B%20Foster%20et%20al.>

"Dozens of Texas Businesses Back Challenge to Abortion Ban: 'This is why our economy is taking a hit'" Saul Elbein, *The Hill*, December 14, 2023: <https://thehill.com/business/4360255-texas-abortion-challenge-businesses-economy-bumble-amicus-brief/#:~:text=All%20this%20means%20that%20the,cited%20in%20the%20Bumble%20letter.>

“As Abortion Laws Drive Obstetricians From Red States, Maternity Care Suffers” Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *New York Times*, Sept. 6, 2023:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/06/us/politics/abortion-obstetricians-maternity-care.html>

<https://www.themha.org/Finance/Publications/Maine-Hospital-s-Economic-Contribution.aspx>

https://www.maine.gov/dafs/economist/sites/maine.gov.dafs.economist/files/inline-files/011322_HLD.pdf

<https://www.mecep.org/blog/survey-results-show-a-broken-health-care-system-in-maine/>