

January 19, 2024

Senator Carney and Representative Moonen, Honorable Members of the Maine Legislative Judiciary Committee:

My name is Maureen Rispoli, and I am a resident of Palermo. I am writing in testimony on LD 780 RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy, to urge you not to allow it to proceed. I am a student in the ADN Nursing Program at KVCC and have classes all day today; otherwise, I would be there before the Judiciary Committee to testify in person. My heart and spirit, however, are there.

As I prepare for a second career in nursing (I have been a teacher in Maine for many years), I am currently preparing for my clinical rotation this semester in Maternal-Newborn care. Just yesterday January 18, a long lab day, I witnessed the birth of a baby in the TD Simulation Lab at KVCC. I was exposed to fetal monitoring for preborn babies, both those doing well and those in distress. We began to scratch the surface of how preterm babies are treated with the goal of preserving their lives. Human life, from its very start months before birth, is amazing and miraculous, and the lengths that medical professionals will go to save preterm babies is commendable and awe-inspiring, and many of these babies survive and thrive. The difference between these babies and those growing in their mothers' wombs at the same gestational stages and facing premature medical professional-induced death, is that the former are treated as the 2nd of the two patients and are wanted. Why do some "deserve" to have their lives valued in effort of preservation, while others have their personhood denied, their patient status dismissed, and their right to life not even considered?

Rather than enshrine in our constitution that mothers (sometimes coerced or persuaded of the notion that they have no "choice") can forevermore legally cause the lives of their unborn children to be taken – and right up to the ninth month, as well, thanks to LD1619 – why don't we support pregnant women by giving them true choice to nurture and see their pregnancies through by using our tax dollars to pay for their healthcare, to give them housing subsidies and provide free or low-cost childcare based on need? Why don't we allow more tax dollars to go to pregnancy centers that not only offer true support but are a voice for choice against the supreme decision for abortion that seems to be so encouraged now in our state as the only option when a woman finds herself pregnant and in crisis, choice be damned! "Pro-choice" is nothing but an illusion of choice when it comes to institutions like Planned Parenthood.

Two huge tragic events occurred in our nation and world not too terribly long ago as history goes. Slavery and the Holocaust happened because the perpetrators dehumanized whole races of people. Child sex trafficking is happening as I type this, and within our own nation more than anywhere else in the world, because children are dehumanized. Enshrining the right to kill a whole segment of humans within the constitution of our state is another means of dehumanizing and denying the personhood of these most innocent of human beings. A fetus is human - a stage in the human life cycle, just as a toddler or a teenager is, not to mention the "fetus" nearing the end of full-term human gestation. Speaking of women's *rights* when it comes to abortion is the epitome of disingenuous; what about the rights of the other persons involved, the very youngest and most innocent of our human race?

Please consider the import of this legislative document very carefully today and going forward. It is not right and it is certainly not about Maine women's rights.

Respectfully,

Maureen A. Rispoli (~~she, her, her~~)
Palermo