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LD 780

The text of the constitutional amendment proposed in LD 780 states that “Every person has a right to personal reproductive autonomy, which is central to dignity and the liberty to determine one's own life course.” The phrasing of this amendment is not clear and is missing basic definitions of terms. What is Maine’s legal definition of a person for the purpose of this amendment? What does “reproductive autonomy” include? Which specific rights would this amendment guarantee?

Article 1 of Section 1 in the Maine constitution cites “inherent and unalienable rights”, including “enjoying and defending life” and “pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness”. Some rights intended to be included within “reproductive autonomy” may be legitimate rights as long as they do not infringe upon the an even more basic or fundamental right of another human being. Is a person’s life not even more central to the dignity and liberty to determine own’s own life course? Abortion advocates include abortion as a right within reproductive autonomy, but reproductive autonomy cannot override another human’s simple right to exist. Otherwise, we’re setting up a legal system that encourages discrimination, where different humans have different value, and where the wellbeing, freedom, and rights of an entire group of humans can be completely ignored.

Even among pro-choice biologists, there is strong consensus that a human’s life begins at fertilization. Note that this is a scientific question, not a religious one. Just minutes after a sperm and egg fuse together and create a one-cell zygote, the zygote starts behaving like an organism, rather than like a single cell – for example, creating organized tissues and organs, which cells cannot do. Zygote, embryo, fetus, infant, toddler, child, adolescent, and adult are all stages of development, but this does not change the essence of what a human being is at each of these stages: Human and living.

It is illegal to kill an infant, but there is no law guaranteeing the protection of human beings at earlier stages of development. The only differences between a zygote (or embryo or fetus) and an infant are size, level of development, environment (inside vs. outside the womb), and degree of dependency, and none of these justify ending the life of a human being, let alone creating a constitutional amendment that would be used to make it legal to end the life of any human.

Maine’s constitution should carefully guard the dignity and legitimate liberties of everyone, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency.

Please vote NO to LD 780, for the protection and safety of the youngest Mainers.

Thank you for your consideration,  
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