Joanne Werther
Bowdoinham
LD 780

January 21, 2024

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Jo Werther. I live in Bowdoinham. I am writing today to urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 780.

When I was 21 years old, I had a pregnancy scare. I call it a "scare" because I was not intending to become pregnant. I was coerced into having sexual intercourse with an older man who had power over me and used it inappropriately and shamelessly (but that's another story: #metoo). I was a senior in college at the time and bound for graduate school. When my period was late, I feared the worst.

On the morning of the day I had scheduled an appointment at Family Planning for a pregnancy test, I got my period. I cried with relief.

During those excruciating days of uncertainty, I considered my options: all three of them. I had these three options because it was the early 1980s. I had three choices. And, spoiler alert: my choice would have been to carry the pregnancy to term and become a single mother. But I considered having an abortion too. That would have been my other choice. Because since 1973 until June 24, 2022, reproductive freedom - the right to choose what is right for me - was the law of the land.

In between college and graduate school, I spent a few years working for Family Planning and WIC in Augusta as a reproductive health care counselor. I saw the connection between lack of access to choice and multigenerational poverty every day. It was an incredible experience to support Maine women (of all ages) as they embraced the right to make reproductive choices that were right for them.

Having come of age after 1973, I never dreamed there would come a day that this right would be taken away. I cried (along with countless other women) on June 24, 2022. I wonder if you did too.

Thank you for hearing my testimony. Please let Maine people's voices be heard. Please note Ought to Pass on LD 780 and let Maine people's voices be heard.

Yours sincerely,
Jo Werther