



Maine People's Alliance

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary. My name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for the Maine People's Alliance. Our 32,000 members stretch from Kittery to Fort Kent.

I am here to testify in favor of LD Senator Vitelli's LD 780, a Resolution "Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy."

After hours of testimony, I am sure you are familiar with this bill. Thus, instead of digging into the policy, I'll tell you my family's story.

When I was five years old, I was overjoyed because I thought I was going to be a big brother. I remember talking to my mother's stomach, telling my brother Jakey all of the things we were going to do together. Then, one night, when my mother was eight months pregnant, my parents looked worried. They rushed me to my friends' house for what ended up being my first ever sleepover.

They hurried to the hospital because my mother stopped feeling Jakey moving. When they arrived, they were told that Jakey had been suffocated by his umbilical cord. My mother had to go through ten hours of labor to deliver a baby that she knew the whole time had already died. We had a funeral with family and friends and over thirty years later it continues to be extremely painful for our family, especially for my mother.

Because of their age, my parents didn't have time to wait, so at the advice of their doctor, they started an infertility treatment process which involved traveling down to Boston numerous times (this was before Portland offered infertility treatment), having two shots a day followed by in-vitro fertilization. They felt very lucky when my mother became pregnant after the first round of treatment because they longed for a second child and each round cost \$7,000 out of pocket. We were all happy.

Because of my parents' age, we were aware of the possibility of having a child with Down Syndrome. We met with friends who have a son with Down Syndrome and discussed in depth what it was like for them. We decided that if the fetus had Down Syndrome they would continue the pregnancy. We had amniocentesis as soon as that was viable without harming the fetus - because if the fetus had Down Syndrome they wanted time to prepare me and themselves for what that would mean in our lives. But that's not what happened.

Commented [KG1]: "had been suffocated by his umbilical cord" might make more sense

Commented [KG2]: Made these changes based on guidance from the National Down syndrome Society <https://ndss.org/preferred-language#:~:text=It%20is%20preferred%20to%20say,s%22%20connotes%20ownership%20or%20possession.>

When my mother got the call from the doctor's office, she was told that the amniocentesis test found a genetic abnormality. The fetus did not have Down Syndrome, but had Trisomy 13. She was told that it is rare - maybe 1 in 1,500 births. The doctor went on to say that it was likely that the fetus would not make it through the pregnancy and if it did, it would die weeks or months after birth. The doctor told them that the baby would be profoundly developmentally disabled, probably blind and deaf, would have feeding and eliminating problems and would suffer immensely for the little time that it had.

Both their well-respected obstetrician and the high-risk pregnancy specialist they had been seeing because of the infertility - both religious Catholics - strongly advised them that the kinder thing to do would be to terminate the pregnancy. My parents agreed that they would not want to inflict suffering on a baby and terminating the pregnancy was the right choice. My parents made a hard choice that day, but it was the right choice for us and our family.

While it was hard, it would have been traumatic mere months after a stillbirth to carry another fetus to term to see it die within days. Mothers around the state could be forced into similarly hellacious situations as quickly as the legislature can flip.

Despite the pro-choice gains that this committee has made, the laws that you have passed are not guaranteed beyond the next election. Basic rights should not be up for debate every election year. State constitutions are meant to protect fundamental rights. With reproductive rights under attack at the Supreme Court, it is crucial to make it crystal clear that reproductive rights are not up for debate or interpretation in Maine. Thank you.

Adam Zuckerman
Maine People's Alliance
LD 780

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