

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee: I am disappointed I was unable to present my testimony in person yesterday, but I was very much “under the weather” due to illness. And so I present my testimony in an on-line format. I urge that this committee vote “ought to pass” as we must whole heartedly support enshrining into the Constitution of the State of Maine the right to personal reproductive autonomy, thus permanently, and finally, taking the government out of the business of controlling women’s reproductive choices.

This constitutional amendment is necessary because of persistent efforts by an anti-abortion and anti-women movement to take women’s rights back to the days when they simply had none. How better to control the lives of women than for the government to make decisions for them over their reproductive health and choices? Years of progress and awareness of the necessity for the equality of women is now under attack. Back to the kitchen you go, and while you are at it, clean up the mess.

It was just over fifty years ago that the United States Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade held that the United States Constitution guaranteed women the right to an abortion. This ruling articulated the constitutional basis of rights thereafter relied on for decades.

But a “new” Supreme Court with “new” justices appointed for the sole reason that they would strike down Roe v. Wade did so before Roe could reach its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. And in doing so, the majority justices did not look to the U.S. Constitution and the rights contained in it, but rather resorted to (1) ancient English law when women had no rights, and that had religious doctrinal origins which were rejected by the U.S. Constitution which clearly separated church and state; and (2) laws found in the U.S. states in the 1800’s that existed while women were still considered second class citizens, had no property rights and had no right to vote. And, these anti-Roe majority justices have been shown to be financially beholden to their benefactors that supported their nominations, and/or have articulated religious beliefs that in reality inform their decisions to take away constitutional rights, which clearly is a violation of the separation of church and state.

So after striking down Roe, the Supreme Court majority said it was up to the states to determine reproductive rights, which some have taken on with a vengeance as male-dominated state legislatures are not only abolishing a woman’s right to an abortion, but also passing laws that put in jeopardy the reproductive health of

women. And the U.S. Congress is trying to get the federal government back in the anti-abortion business. Just last week two bills were passed by the Republican majority House of Representatives: (1) a bill to bar a federal agency from investigating federal funding for fake abortion clinic “pregnancy centers” that counsel against abortions; and (2) a bill to require colleges and universities that receive federal funding to provide pregnant women students with information about rights and resources available to them, i.e. receiving anti-abortion materials. (Both of Maine’s Representatives voted against these bills!)

And here in Maine, Republicans are at work. Although Maine currently protects women’s decisions regarding their reproductive rights thanks to Governor Mills and strong democratic legislative leadership, Republicans in the Maine Legislature keep trying to chip away at these rights by trying to legislate government control in these decisions such as trying to mandate counseling, restrict insurance coverage, and limit out of state access, among other things.

It is in response to these anti-democratic, extreme actions now being launched against women that the solution is for state constitutional amendments guaranteeing personal reproductive autonomy, as has been proposed by LD 780. Protection of women’s reproductive decisions must now be made permanent, so that women’s rights are not on a constantly moving Yoyo of uncertainty manipulated by a Republican party that has aligned with conservative evangelicals, religious fanatics and zealots who do, or hope to, control legislatures.

Please let the people of Maine vote on this proposed amendment to the Constitution of Maine. It is time once and for all to give constitutional protection to the reproductive rights.