

My name is Erin Bove-Fenderson, and I am a resident of North Berwick, Maine. I am writing today to oppose LD 975.

I am a woman living in Maine. As such, I am supported by the current laws that grant me bodily autonomy and the freedom to make deeply personal choices about my reproductive health and decisions to (or not to) raise a family here. This is something that I have always deeply appreciated about my home state.

This bill does not feel appropriate to the values I feel I share with other Mainers. It seeks to repeal the crimes of elevated aggravated assault on, and domestic violence elevated aggravated assault on, a pregnant woman. I cannot envision why that could be a good thing. At the same time, it redefines "human being" and "person" to cover the moment of conception, an ill-defined and nonscientific approach to defining personhood, solely to justify criminalization of the abortion procedure. This would constitute a clear legislative shift in priorities signaling to women in the state of Maine that they are of lower priority than the children they might bear.

Like many in this state, I strongly feel that the decision to continue or terminate a pregnancy is deeply personal and should be left to the individual, not determined by the government. Criminalizing abortion does not eliminate the need for it; historical evidence supports the argument that it instead drives the practice underground, where dangerous, unsafe procedures put people's lives at risk. Criminalization will lead to more Maine women seeking desperate and unsafe alternatives, resulting in increased maternal morbidity and mortality. In addition, this bill will disproportionately harm low-income individuals in this state, who already face significant barriers to healthcare (and childcare) access. This is not just an issue of reproductive rights; it is a matter of public health and safety.

Maine has long been a state that values personal freedoms, individual rights, and the ability for people to make their own healthcare decisions. Public opinion in Maine in the past has supported access to abortion, and this bill is out of step with the values of Mainers and the progress we have made as a society. By criminalizing abortion, the state would be imposing a restrictive and harmful policy that goes against the will of the people and undermines Maine's reputation as a state that supports the health and well-being of its residents.

For all of these reasons, I strongly urge you to protect the rights and freedoms of Mainers by voting against LD 975.

Thank you for your time and consideration.