

Linda Robinson
Bar Harbor
LD 1578

Testimony in Support of LD 1578: An Act to Require the Department of Health and Human Services to Review Disruption to or Removal of Health Services

Senator Grohoski, Representative Dodge, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Linda Robinson and I live in Bar Harbor. I am a nurse midwife who provided women's health at MDI hospital, including obstetrics, for 23 years. I am in strong support of LD 1578.

Last week, I wrote a Letter to The Editor in my local paper addressing the closure of the OB unit in Bar Harbor. Sunday I got a call from a community member who'd read the letter and wanted to talk to me. He told me he misunderstood the reasoning for the closure and figured the hospital's statement that the birth rate was declining and it wasn't fiscally possible or safe to keep the unit open was valid. He hadn't considered the safety of women now having to travel an hour or two to another hospital. He said he thought of his wife, who gave birth to their last child at MDI hospital. The birth had gone well and the doctor had left. An hour later his wife started bleeding heavily, then hemorrhaged. I was on the unit at the time and was called into her room. With a few emergency measures the nurses and I were able to control her bleeding. He told me I saved her life and hadn't considered what would have happened if they were in a car or unable to summon someone in an overcrowded ward. Women will now be at much higher risk for that complication alone during their travel to and from the hospital. Closing maternity units is not safer for women. In fact, childbearing women all over this state are much less safe due to lack of access to services. Denying vital services is a human rights abuse. All of this could and should have been publicly discussed.

A hospital board member told me she also misunderstood the reason the ward was closing. She was going by the administration's recommendation that it was no longer "safe" or affordable to provide this care. The hospital board as well as our community have been misinformed and compromised.

Medicine is continually evolving, but the one thing in medicine that will never change is childbirth. To deny these services without a transparent process is shortsighted, immoral, unethical, and probably illegal. To deny one segment of the population access to care is discrimination.

This bill will allow for more transparency, informed decision making, and problem solving.