

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and Members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, my name is April Duval. I live in New Sharon, Maine. I'm here today in strong support of LD 616 and asking you to vote ought to pass, because the health care professionals in Maine bravely choosing to provide the most stigmatized and politicized medical care in this country deserve protections under the law. As someone who has trusted these healthcare providers through the most vulnerable experience in my life, I know they deserve these protections proposed in LD 616, and so much more. But I acknowledge that we are discussing whether you will enact legal protections to support undeniably important work of abortion care that they have been trained to safely provide. So that is where I meet you today.

I will take a moment, however, and ask you to think about the absurd reality that in 2023 as a state, we are pushed to enshrine in law **specific protections** for the ability of **any** healthcare professionals to practice the safest and most effective form of medicine they have been tirelessly trained and educated to provide. Imagine the social climate that would require this kind of legislation for the treatment of heart attacks, stroke, diabetes or cancer. Imagine that multiple other states have outlawed the treatment of these conditions, and created political refugees in the form of healthcare patients seeking treatment, and that as Mainers we choose to force our strong, capable and effective healthcare professionals to balance their Hippocratic oath with the ideological legal threats that come with providing that medical care.

When you strip away the propaganda, the stigma, the ideology, that is what we are discussing today. We are talking about political refugees from within our own country, coming to Maine to access healthcare that has been outlawed in their state, and asking our healthcare professionals to treat them. This is where we are, and we have seen it coming. Our providers have seen it coming. They deserve to know, fundamentally and constitutionally, that Mainers have their back, in every way possible. And it is our job today to show them that we do, and pass this legislation. Thank you for your time.