

LD 935

Good morning, members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Mindy Woerter, and I live in Durham.

Seven years ago, almost to the day, I decided to have an abortion. It wasn't a decision I expected to make at that point in my life. I was married, already a mother, and desperately hoping to grow my family.

But, after making it through the first trimester, I found out my wanted pregnancy was nonviable due to fetal anomalies incompatible with life. Continuing the pregnancy put my health at risk. I had a daughter at home to take care of, a family who needed me healthy and whole.

I knew I couldn't continue a pregnancy feeling like a ticking time bomb waiting for a miscarriage to happen, wondering if I'd face serious complications like infection, infertility, or even death – all were possibilities. There wasn't a question in my mind. I knew an abortion was the right choice for me.

But since my husband is a federal employee, our insurance is prohibited from covering abortions except in very narrow circumstances. It didn't matter that my pregnancy was nonviable or that my health was at risk. Unless I was actively dying, my insurance wouldn't provide abortion coverage. The bill was over \$6,000.

It's hard to adequately describe how dehumanizing it felt to be treated as if my life held such little value. I still can't comprehend how the outcome desired by those in power would have been for me to suffer, and maybe even die, leaving my daughter without a mother.

Because of my privilege, I was able to get the abortion I needed. But for many people, financial barriers put abortion out of reach. Being forced to wait, or to choose between paying for an abortion and paying for food or rent, jeopardizes a person's health, as well as their family's economic well-being.

Everyone – no matter their source of insurance or their income – deserves access to safe and affordable abortion care. The right of bodily autonomy should not be subject to the whims of insurance companies, health care companies, or lawmakers. And health care professionals who do this important work deserve to be able to practice without fear of threats or harm.

I urge you to support LD 935, so that everyone in Maine can choose, without interference or barriers or shame, what we do with our bodies. Abortion access is a fundamental human right.

Thank you.