

ME Filon
Testimony LD 935

Hello Representative Moonen, and members of the Health Insurance & Financial Services Committee; my name is MaryElizabeth Filon, and I live in Falmouth, Maine.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my experience in support of LD 935 today. On Monday, April 1, 2003, squeezed in before scheduled appointments, the perinatologist, my now ex-husband, and I peered at the fetal ultrasounds that clearly showed the extent of developmental anomalies initiating in the 11th week of embryonic development. I earned my masters in human anatomy, and embryology was essential to my training. At the time, I was working at a medical school in another state and would routinely go into the library to reread embryology books during my lunch break to see exactly what was going on in real time fetal development. (In fact, I remember clearly reading about and dismissing my exact issue as a fascinating twist of nature that clearly wouldn't happen to me.) My ex, a physician, shared a look with the specialist; this told me without words that the fetus was at risk, that we weren't going to walk out of the office with reassurance that the test results were just a false negative.

Because of our connections and our proximity to three pediatric hospitals, we were able to get consults within hours. Pediatric specialists independently confirmed that the developmental anomalies were too significant and if I was able to carry the pregnancy to term, incompatible with life. This pregnancy carried increasing risks to both the fetus and me and, due to how far along I was in this pregnancy, a decision about care needed to be made that day or it was decided for us. We were one day from the legal limit.

Yet, we were incredibly lucky. We had access to resources, knowledge, and professional and private support. We lived in an area with abundant specialized facilities and healthcare professionals within a 45 minute drive. My care that day made the decision to terminate my pregnancy very easy. Every clinician and my then husband gave me the choice to continue or terminate my pregnancy. It was my first parenting decision and one of the hardest I have ever made. And still, I wouldn't change a thing.

The reality is that you can't control how a pregnancy unfolds, that you can't change certain diagnoses. You need time to make informed healthcare decisions that are right for you. Regardless of where you live, you have to have access to quality health care and resources.

I hear about physicians who are leaving their practices and graduates choosing not to pursue training in states where people without any medical knowledge are legislating restrictions on reproductive healthcare with legal repercussions for providing that care. Who will care for women like me? Maine had three high risk OB/GYNs when I was pregnant with my second child in 2006. Three. I was lucky to have such specialized care.

Our actions have a ripple effect, felt long after the initial experience. I know that I made the right choice for me, for my fetus, for my children. I am lucky because I had a choice and because that choice gave my family a future. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 935 to ensure all women the same opportunity they deserve and need.