

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Maine Committee on Judiciary. I am Wendy Merrill from Benton.

I am here to testify in support of LD 1197, *An Act to Prevent Coerced Abortion*

The State of Maine has a powerful duty to ensure a decision to abort is voluntary, without pressure, or coercion. Studies show that up to 60% of women abort because of pressure from someone else (<https://tinyurl.com/MICoercionBan>) A woman pressured to abort is not making this decision for herself. Just last night, a woman told me that her husband coerced her into aborting her last baby by threatening to leave her and their living children. She did abort, but here she is 40 years later, lamenting that she caved to that pressure, still mourning the loss of her baby, and regretting having that abortion. He ended up leaving her anyway. In my role as Executive Director of a pregnancy help center, I have walked with numerous women through the process of healing after abortion. Most of those women felt coerced to abort their baby. A piece of health is mental health. Many women suffer from mental health issues after a coerced abortion. To ignore this is irresponsible and cruel.

If we truly are about women & women's rights, about a woman's right to choose, then we must be doing everything we possibly can to ensure women are making abortion decisions after they have gathered all the facts, have ample time to process them, and are in no way pressured to end the life of their baby. A woman who is coerced is not making her own choice.

I urge you to vote 'YES' to LD 1197, as well as to LD 494, LD 771, LD 1249, LD 1614, and LD 1809. Thank you.