



Statement of Abbie Strout-Bentes, Director of Education and Community Engagement,
Mabel Wadsworth Center to the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

May 5, 2023

LD 494, An Act to Conform State Funding to the Federal Hyde Amendment,
Limiting Funding for Some Abortion Services

LD 771, An Act to Protect a Woman's Right to Withdraw Consent for an Abortion

LD 1197, An Act to Prevent Coerced Abortion

LD 1249, An Act to Protect the Quality of Care Provided via Telehealth by Prohibiting
Physicians from Prescribing Abortion-inducing Drugs or Devices Through
Telehealth or Other Electronic Communication

LD 1614, An Act to Require an Ultrasound and Certain Counseling Before an Abortion

Ought Not to Pass

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the joint standing committee on Judiciary, my name is Abbie Strout-Bentes, I am the Director of Education and Community Engagement at Mabel Wadsworth Center in Bangor. Mabel Wadsworth Center is the only independent, not-for-profit, feminist health center in Maine. We provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare, including prenatal care, abortion care, birth control, STD testing and treatment, cancer screenings, and other wellness care.

I am here today on behalf of our health center to oppose all five bills being heard this morning.

Let's be clear, the goal of these bills is to restrict access to abortion care and are part of an overall strategy to ban abortion. They are unnecessary and roll back important changes that have made access to abortion more equitable in Maine.

The Supreme Court's decision last June to overturn Roe v. Wade has amplified the disparities in accessing reproductive health care in the United States. Prior to that decision, lawmakers opposed to abortion spent decades passing state and federal legislation, similar to the bills presented today, that chipped away access to abortion. As a result, a pregnant person's ability to access the abortion they need depends on where they live and how much money or resources they have.

At the same time, in Maine, we have followed the clear support of our community members by not only protecting access to abortion but also passing laws that expanded access to equitable care. When I started at Mabel Wadsworth Center, a pregnant person had to travel to Portland, Augusta, or Bangor to access medication abortion care, and most patients had to pay out-of-pocket for their care. Now people living in our most rural communities can access medication abortion at their local family planning clinic or via telehealth with the pills mailed to their homes with the care covered by their insurance. These changes have been critical to ensuring that every person in Maine has the ability to make decisions about their bodies and their lives.

Abortion is a very common medical procedure and a normal part of reproductive health lives. One in four women will have an abortion by the time they turn 45. The science is clear: it is safe and life-saving medical care¹. Additionally, access to abortion allows people to build the families they want and contributes to a thriving community. Please do not roll back the progress we have made in Maine.

On behalf of Mabel Wadsworth Center, I urge you to oppose these bills.

Thank you for your time.

1

<https://www.ansirh.org/research/research/abortions-can-be-provided-safely-and-effectively-using-telehealth>