



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Jan Dodge in support of
**LD 995, An Act to Provide Insurance Coverage for a Second Opinion If a Health Care
Provider Recommends an Abortion for Health or Safety Reasons**
Before the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee

Good afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and honorable members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. My name is Jan Dodge and I represent House District #39, Belfast, Northport and Belmont. I am before you today testifying in strong support of **LD 995, An Act to Provide Insurance Coverage for a Second Opinion If a Health Care Provider Recommends an Abortion for Health and Safety Reasons.**

Is there any situation where a second opinion should not be sought? We seek to make wise and informed choices multiple times every day. Healthcare decisions are the most important and require as much expert information as possible!

Sometime in the 1930's, my grandmother discovered she was pregnant again. She experienced the death of her first child, Baby Maxine, soon after she was born. Several years later she had my Mom, who was healthy and whole. This pregnancy was different, even by the medical standards of that era. She was terribly ill her entire pregnancy. Somewhere along the way, her doctor suggested she have an abortion. This radical suggestion was about the health of the baby and concern for her life. There is hardly a more difficult diagnosis to receive.

There should be no barrier to receiving a second medical opinion that is covered by health insurance in these cases. Further, I would suggest that the choice of the source of that medical opinion be left up to the patient. It should not be limited to another doctor in the same practice, hospital or health care system. Patients in Maine are lucky to have access to highly competent medical OBGYN professionals in Bangor, Portland and Boston.

Gram couldn't bring herself to have an abortion. She gave birth to twins, both of whom were mentally and physically handicapped. She and Grampa were not able to care for them and relied on a collection of hired nurses, family, neighbors and friends for help. Luckily, a cousin from Portland who worked at the Pride Training School for the mentally handicapped was able to help, also. Both of the twins were sent to Pineland, where they lived for decades. In the 70's, Mom

and I worried about where they were placed as part of the Pineland Consent Decree and patient relocation to group homes. One of them outlived my Mom and I was appointed her guardian.

My Mom would drive my Gram to Pineland to visit. My brother and I were brought along to help. Gram always left in tears. My Grampa was so overwhelmed with grief and guilt, he became an alcoholic and did not see his daughters after they were sent away. They were both tormented until the days they died that they had not made the right decision to prevent the suffering and anguish my Aunts Shirley and Diana endured throughout their lives. Their decision affected three generations of our family. I decided early in life that I would not take the risk and would not have kids. My brother and sister-in-law worried during their two pregnancies, but were blessed with two healthy children.

Please pass this bill. Women and their partners need support and the benefit of medical expertise to make informed decisions about their pregnancies and healthcare. Second opinions matter.

Thank you.