

Chairmen and Honorable Members of the Judiciary

My name is Barbara Seelen and I live in Cumberland Foreside, Maine. I am testifying today in opposition of LD 1619.

Over 30 years ago, I had a child born with birth defects. After several surgeries and complications, Elizabeth passed away at the age of 11 months. Prenatal ultrasounds were just becoming available and I did not have one.

Currently, Maine law allows abortion up to the point of viability, which has been defined as usually about 24-28 weeks. Maine law also provides for exceptions to the viability restriction, to save the life or health of the mother.

LD 1619 was inspired by a Yarmouth woman who during the later part of her pregnancy, learned that her child had a deadly form of skeletal dysplasia. As explained, the condition meant the child would likely be born with broken bones and not be able to breathe. The mother was concerned about the child's suffering at birth. She decided she wanted an abortion and had to travel out of state to get it. I understand Governor Mills' compassion for this mother, but that said, this rare instance SHOULD NOT be the impetus for changing Maine's law as it stands. The proposed change in the law would give a licensed medical professional the power to determine if a late term abortion is medically necessary, without defining the parameters of "medical necessity" or taking into account the viability of the child.

The current law is more than adequate to cover anyone wanting to terminate a pregnancy because of a variety of reasons, including birth defects. And most prenatal testing including amniocentesis and ultrasound screenings are done before 22 weeks.

Recently, many Americans have been concerned with what they consider to be extremely restrictive abortion laws enacted by other states. I think most Americans believe that abortion should be legal but limited. Pew polling data shows that the further along pregnancy is, the less likely people are to support abortion. In a time when most Americans believe in the middle ground on this issue, why would Maine choose to enact an extreme position. Let Maine stand as an example of where to find a middle ground on this issue and not participate in this national tug of war.

In March, an article in the Portland Press Herald celebrated a baby preemie, named Winner, going home after having been born at gestational age of 22 weeks. As a society, we cannot applaud the survival of one child, a preemie and allow the taking of another viable life. Please say NO to this proposed extreme change in Maine's abortion law.