

Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Debra Heathcote, and I am a resident of Holden, in Penobscot County. I am here to testify in opposition to LD 1619.

I am a hospital crisis worker, a former teacher, and the grandmother of 10 beautiful grandchildren. I speak to you now of one grandson, currently a bright and talented 12-year-old boy. His story goes like this:

When Beniah was 21 weeks in the womb, he was diagnosed with spina bifida, which means his spinal cord had an interruption in development. The doctor offered to end the pregnancy with a surgical abortion, grimly stating that he could be a vegetable. Data shows that 66% of babies so diagnosed are terminated. However, Beniah's parents declined that solution. As Beniah matured in the womb, a hospital pediatrician predicted that Beniah would be blind and the 2 lobes of his brain would not be able to communicate. The doctor made that conclusion because when reading the ultrasound, he could not see the part of the brain that connect the two lobes). On the other hand, the pediatric neurologist (bless his heart) weighed in and said these profound words: "Probably

everyone has something abnormal about their brains, and they just don't know it, because they learn to compensate. Let's wait and see."

What followed was a time of anguished prayer and encouragement from many sources. Beniah was born a full-term baby and immediately underwent corrective surgery with the kind neurosurgeon. So would he be considered a viable birth? Hmm. Today Beniah is a smart, kind, middle child in a family of 6 boys and one girl. He excels at chemistry and building Legos. He is also the most patient 12-year-old I know (and I taught 6th-graders). According to his mother, he wants to grow up to be a scientist and work on ways to fix damaged nervous systems. He will be an overcomer because the doctors, who did not know everything, did not call the shots. He may change the world.

I don't think Beniah knows these all the details. But he would want others to have the same chance he did – a chance to have a life, to be prayed for, to be healed, and to someday heal others. God is gracious. Don't take what God has made and despise it.

Please do not turn Maine into an abortion mecca where people from all over the world come to have their full-term, unrestricted abortions. Do not turn "Vacationland" into "Abortionland." Abortion is NOT "the way life should be."

This is a bill the Mainers do not want. Please represent the majority, the people in Maine who do not support LD 1619 or it's add-ons.

Thank you.