

Honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Rochelle Albert I am a single mom, and a resident of Winslow, Maine. I am here today to testify in OPPOSITION to LD1619-

LD1619 is a RADICAL BILL. This bill is a deplorable threat to our most vulnerable. The right to life is a fundamental human right, and it should never be taken away from any individual, including a newborn baby. It is not only morally wrong, the negative effects of such a bill passing would be devastating for women, especially those who are making the difficult decision to terminate their pregnancy. The emotional and mental toll of ending a pregnancy is already significant, but to do so at full gestation would only compound the trauma and grief that a woman would experience. This alone makes this bill exceptionally concerning.

The decision to end a pregnancy is not one that any woman takes lightly. It is a deeply personal and emotionally charged decision that can have a profound impact on a woman's life no matter who you are, where you are in life, or what circumstance you face.

The emotional toll of ending a pregnancy prematurely is overwhelming. It can cause feelings of grief, guilt, shame, and regret. It is a loss that is felt deeply.

At 40 weeks (full term) I was induced into labor with my son Isaac. He's here with me today! I was induced without the support of a partner. Isaac's father was absent, and unsupportive from the very beginning of my pregnancy. He made no effort to be involved during pregnancy, nor did he attend Isaac's birth. This was an incredibly isolating and difficult experience for me.

I bore the physical, emotional, and financial burdens of pregnancy and childbirth alone. It exacerbated the existing financial and emotional stressors already on me. I worked multiple jobs while pregnant, and not one provided maternity leave. I was a working employee in Maine's workforce up until 2 days before my due date. I needed to save as much as I could, despite my balloon sized feet and ankles. I was, and am, Isaac's only provider. I developed gestational diabetes, and inevitably right before birth, preeclampsia.

I am here to attest to you that I faced significant odds during my pregnancy as a single woman. Despite all of the odds, I will tell you that none compared to the painful thought of losing my baby. I had been growing and dreaming about the little human being that I had been nurturing in my womb for 9 whole months. After carrying a baby for that long, the anticipation of finally holding them in your arms is surreal. They are FULLY and completely developed at this stage. The thought of losing them would be heartbreaking. The grief would be insurmountable.

Unfortunately, that would nearly become our reality at hour 36 of labor. Isaac was a big baby. He was 10.8 pounds and 22.6 long inches. During his birth I was given pitocin to initiate dilating and contractions, pushing him out of me felt like pushing out a boulder. At 4:16 am my sister who was in the room with me at the time recorded a video of his head emerging. It would not be until 4:34am that we would get a full picture of Isaac's body.

Upon birthing his head, his shoulders got stuck underneath my pubic bone. His birth quickly turned into an emergency. I can't describe to you the thoughts that were circulating through my head, the pounding of my chest, or the overwhelming feeling of panic and despair coursing through me. It is something I won't ever forget. After trying everything she could and failing to get Isaac unstuck, the Nurse/midwife finally grabbed some tools to cut me wide open. She dislodged his shoulders and pulled him out. His body was limp, dark blue, and lifeless. This imagery today is still stuck with me.

The nursing staff immediately initiated CPR. I watched in horror the scene in front of me, fully believing that I had lost my son. Nine whole months of carrying Isaac inside of me, feeling his heartbeat, only to walk out of the hospital empty handed. I watched as the staff tried to resuscitate him... continually give him chest thrusts, it was as if it was all in slow motion. One, two, breath. One, two, breath. After what felt like a century, they finally got a pulse! He was intubated, and placed on a cooling mat and stretcher and life-flighted to EMMC's NICU. Isaac was without oxygen for a significant amount of time. Babies without oxygen for this long have a slim chance at living life to their full potential.

We were separated following his birth, he was taken from me and life-flighted to another hospital's NICU. It was there that he started having seizures. I, still a patient at the hospital I had birthed at, was wheeled to another room following surgery. It was here that I would reach my darkest hour. Wondering what would happen to my baby, what would happen to me if I lost him, what would happen if I left this hospital without a baby in my arms. This trauma still sticks with me, and has been extremely difficult to process.

The pain of believing that you will never get to hold that baby, or see their first smile or hear their first words is absolutely devastating. I can't imagine the trauma and impact of this scenario on someone who did actually walk out of a hospital after 9 months empty handed.

Isaac is here with me testifying today as a miracle man. He is an overcomer, and just like him, all babies have an innate will to live. They are so resilient. On the fifth day of life outside the womb he was given an MRI to measure the damage his brain suffered in birth. They were looking for white-like bursts of injury and they found nothing! An

absolute miracle. Despite every seemingly possible difficulty, we overcame all odds against us. He is thriving with life.

To leave the hospital without a baby in your arms would feel like a cruel and unfair twist of fate. The physical pain of childbirth combined with the emotional pain of leaving empty-handed would be utterly traumatic. The sense of emptiness and loss would be all-consuming. It would be a profound and life-altering experience that would be felt deeply and take years to heal.

If we can do it, so can any other woman. We were not set up for success, yet, we succeeded. Any mother facing a situation like this can too.

In conclusion, I cannot support a radical abortion bill that would strip away the right to life of a baby born at full gestation. It goes against the fundamental principles of human dignity and poses a serious threat to the health and well-being of women.

I urge you to consider the gravity of your decision and the immense harm this bill will cause. If this bill is passed, I will not hesitate to vote for every single one of your opponents. The health and wellbeing of women and their babies must come before any political agenda or ideology. Do the right thing and vote against this bill.