

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee; my name is Zoe Reich, and I live in Portland, Maine.

I'm a mother and Mainer. I'm sharing my deeply personal story with you because we have the opportunity to come together as a compassionate community and help people like me and families like mine.

My road to motherhood was bumpy and unexpectedly political. What began as a planned, healthy first pregnancy took a devastating turn when severe fetal anomalies were detected during a routine scan. A team of doctors laid out my options and what the different paths forward would look like. All were terribly heartbreaking. And I was lucky because my doctors were able to have an informed and open conversation with me so that I could make the best decision for me and my family. That decision was to have an abortion.

But providing information was all they could do because the state I was in at the time, New York, banned abortion after 24 weeks, similar to the law in Maine. Their hands were tied; they could not legally offer me the care I, and they, understood I needed.

I was at the most vulnerable moment of my life; my husband and I had just been given life shattering news by doctors we trusted. Doctors who were forced by lawmakers to tell us "we're sorry, we can't help you."

I was denied critical abortion care when I needed it because of a cruel and arbitrary timeline set by politicians, not doctors.

The only way I could access care was to immediately get on a plane and leave my home and my support network of family and friends. I traveled to Colorado, to one of the few facilities that, even before the fall of *Roe*, could legally provide the medical care I desperately needed. Accessing that care required walking behind thick bulletproof glass that protects patients like me and the providers who risk their lives to help us.

My abortion cost \$10,000, plus travel expenses. I'm lucky I had the support and financial resources; but the reality is that most people do not.

It doesn't have to be this way. Abortion is healthcare. All Mainers should have the freedom to get the healthcare they need, when they need it, right here at home.

The end of my first pregnancy was heartbreaking beyond words. But my abortion was a blessing and a liberation and a salvation.

The truth is:

Any restriction on abortion is extreme for the person who needs it.

Any restriction on abortion is a violation of someone's autonomy.

Any restriction on abortion hurts someone's family.

I often think of the opportunities and futures that abortion access makes possible: jobs, education, fulfilling relationships, safe and healthy future pregnancies, economic stability for families of all sizes. My abortion changed my life and allowed me to go on to have two amazing, healthy, children.

It's difficult to share my story, but it's imperative to understand that patients who need abortions later in pregnancy are your family, your friends, your neighbors- we are people you know and love.

I love this state and I want it to be a place where no one will be forced to endure the cruel and punitive suffering that I did, in order to get the healthcare they need. I hope you not only hear my story, but feel my story, and vote Ought to Pass on LD 1619 and LD 1343.