

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Brittany Lee, I live in Berwick Maine, and I'm here today to testify in support of LD 1343 and LD 1619.

I was 22 weeks along when I decided to get an abortion. At the time, I was very depressed and in a dark place. I had just been honorably discharged from the military after serving for seven years. During that time, I was sexually harassed, assaulted and raped multiple times, including having my first sexual experience be rape by a fellow service member.

My time in the service was plagued by sexual assault, and once I left, it all hit me at once because I didn't have the work and surroundings to distract me. I was now home with our young children while my husband remained on active duty. All these memories created a perfect storm to feed my depression. I was aware of my mental, physical, and emotional state and realized I couldn't safely get through my pregnancy and delivery. All of the events I'd experienced had caused my mental health to plummet. I already had two children, and we only had one income. My husband and I knew that if the pregnancy continued, it would've pushed me over the edge; I knew I couldn't stay pregnant.

We were stationed in South Carolina at this time. We were both distant with our families, and I hadn't made any friends in the area. So when it came time to look for an abortion clinic, I used Google. I found a place near me and made an appointment to go in and see what could be done. That's when I learned I was at 22 weeks. The clinic said they couldn't help me because of how far along I was. So my husband and I started making phone calls to South Carolina clinics. In the end, we found one in Georgia. We had to pack up our van with the children and dogs, drive hundreds of miles, and find a pet-friendly hotel where we could stay overnight because of the 24-hour waiting period required by law.

The procedure went smoothly, the doctors, nurses and staff were very kind and compassionate the entire time. My abortion was the best and most compassionate health care I have ever received. Once I was back home, I

struggled with my decision and the shame that is heaped on pregnant people by different religious groups and personal beliefs. But once I was able to get the help I needed and had my husband by my side, I pushed through the shame and became empowered by my choice. Knowing that me and only me, knew what the right decision was, helped me see the love and compassion that came with the decision to get an abortion.

Mental health needs to be recognized as a factor when it comes to abortion. The time around that pregnancy, I was struggling severely with my mental health, specifically MST (Military Sexual Trauma) from sexual assault and rape while serving in the military, and wasn't getting any help. I knew I would have ended my life if I had continued with that pregnancy.

Abortion is healthcare, plain and simple. The decision to get an abortion is an extremely personal decision that should be made only by that person, not by politicians that only wish to push their extreme beliefs on others. There are many reasons why a pregnant person wants or needs an abortion, each unique with their circumstances, and politicians, regardless of their own personal religious beliefs, have no place in anyone's private medical decisions. As a Mainer, an American and a veteran, I value freedom for all, and this bill will protect our reproductive freedoms here in Maine.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1343 and LD 1619. Thank you.