

## **Testimony against LD 1619:**

From:

Douglas Dodge

577 Church Hill Road

Augusta, ME 04330

Hello everyone, and thank you for taking time to hear my heart on this proposed abortion law.

My name is Doug Dodge. I'm the pastor of Centerpoint Community Church in Waterville. And this beautiful girl is my daughter Adaya Dodge. My wife and I have three birth children and four adopted children, all incredibly precious to us.

When we started adopting medically needy children, there were things we thought we could handle and things we thought we couldn't. Our first medically needy daughter was born with methadone in her system. We had to put a liquid form of the drug in her bottle to slowly wean her from it so she wouldn't suffer withdrawal symptoms. It took six months, but she was free of the paralyzing, painful affects of the addiction.

Our next child came from a drug abuse situation as well. The call came like this. "We have a child just born here with no elbows, no knees, his feet bend backwards so his toes touch his heels, and his hands bend backwards too. He also has dysmorphic features. Would you come down and see if this would be a good fit?" It turned out he had Arthrogryposis, and they were quite certain he would never walk. But when we went down to the hospital, and held that little beautiful boy, all we saw was ... our son. We fell immediately in love. And have been ever since! And he walks; runs even! He's a typical 10 year old boy who amazingly makes the adjustments he needs to to do tasks that come naturally to most...he finds a way!

Our youngest of this trio of medically needy children was this wonderful daughter of mine. We were told there was a 10 month old (born at 30 weeks) with developmental delay that needed immediate attention. Later, she would be diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Her diagnosis seemed far outside our comfort zone, and exactly what we had said going in to this process, that we didn't want. It would change everything. The wheelchair. The constant care. The feeding tube (which is still how she eats the majority of her food). How do we communicate? But we went. And God

dropped this unbelievable treasure in our laps. It did change everything. For the better! We fell so in love with this HIGHLY communicative, deeply emotional daughter who has an amazing sense of humor and whose smile brings joy to everyone who meets her!

About a year ago, Adaya was sitting on my lap watching a movie with me. She can eat small bits of solid food, and we were sharing popcorn. She started choking. I tried everything. Her two eyes went in different directions. We called 911, praying to God we wouldn't lose her! The ambulance got there pretty quickly, but it had been a long time to not be breathing. They felt (as did my wife) that it was a seizure. I had to watch them take my girl away in an ambulance with my wife, because Covid restrictions allow only one parent to go. I prayed and cried as I waited for news, thinking I could possibly lose her. Some of the worst hours of my life. It was a seizure. Praise God, she recovered.

But this child, who brought so much into my life that I initially thought I didn't want, was almost taken from me. And it would have completely devastated me. I see the incredible value in who she is, who she was created to be.

This bill allows parents to terminate their own child, based on things they fear will drastically alter their life. And in a panic, and in complete ignorance (because they haven't even met the child yet!), they would be aided in making the most heart-breaking and irreversible decision of their life. They are allowed to deem the child simply not worth it. My child, by this bill's standard, does not deserve to live unless someone is willing to put up with what's "wrong" with her. But they will miss everything that's RIGHT about her!

My Savior, my Lord Jesus, did not consider me "inconvenient" or "unworthy of saving". In fact, He did just the opposite. The one that created me saw that I had broken things in my life, so He laid down His life for me! He gave up everything for me, rather than giving up on me. He has called me to do the same, and I have found the greatest joy and purpose in doing so!