



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

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Testimony of
Bethany Beausang, Senior Policy Advisor to
Governor Janet T. Mills
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
In Support of LD 1619, *An Act To Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Laws*
Governor's Bill Sponsored by: Speaker Talbot Ross
Hearing Date: May 1, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. I am Bethany Beausang, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Janet Mills. I am here to testify in support of the Governor's bill, LD 1619, *An Act To Improve Maine's Reproductive Privacy Laws*. The Governor thanks Speaker Talbot Ross and President Jackson for sponsoring this important legislation as well as the many cosponsors of the bill for their support.

In 1993, in response to a U.S. Supreme Court case, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which permitted states to impose barriers on and restrict access to abortion, Maine leaders came together on a bipartisan basis to pass the Maine Reproductive Privacy Act. This enshrined in Maine law the right to an abortion.

Three decades later, we are here again in the wake of another U.S. Supreme Court case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned the longstanding precedent in this country of *Roe v. Wade* guaranteeing the right to abortion in the U.S. Constitution. While many states are using this opportunity to impose an unprecedented assault on access to abortion and other reproductive health care, I am here today on behalf of Governor Mills to make clear that, under her leadership, Maine will not follow that direction. Instead, I am here today to reaffirm Governor Mills' commitment to preserving safe, legal abortion care in Maine and to updating our own longstanding state law, the Reproductive Privacy Act, to better recognize the reproductive rights of women in Maine.

The Governor's bill, LD 1619, modernizes Maine's 30-year-old Reproductive Privacy Act and strengthens access to reproductive health care in Maine in three ways:

First, this bill makes clear that decisions about abortion later in pregnancy will be made by a woman in consultation with her doctor.

Current Maine law allows for abortion later in pregnancy to "preserve the life or health of the mother", but this rigid approach to legislating what is fundamentally a medical procedure fails to address the varied and unique circumstances faced by people in their pregnancies.



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The Governor's bill recognizes that we cannot – and we should not – legislate very personal and private nuances of abortion care in state law through exception after exception. Instead, the decision-making authority should be in the hands of pregnant women and doctors by specifying that abortions later in pregnancy, which are rare in Maine and the United States, “may be performed only when it is necessary in the professional judgment of a physician.”

Second, the Governor's bill eliminates language in current law that subjects medical providers who perform abortions to criminal penalties under certain circumstances, regulating abortion like other safe, legal medical procedures. Health care providers will still be held to rigorous professional standards and applicable laws, such as medical malpractice laws, but abortion will be treated like every other medical procedure under law.

Third, the Governor's bill updates the way we collect data about abortions in Maine. Currently, Maine utilizes a federal form – the United States Standard Report of Induced Termination of Pregnancy – to report abortion data to the U.S. CDC. That outdated form requests information that is not relevant to an abortion and that creates stigma about people who seek abortion. Under this bill, Maine, like many other states, will continue to collect and report important data on these procedures and will work with the U.S. CDC to design a form that includes relevant, informative, and non-stigmatizing data.

These are the three components of this legislation. Very simply: this bill makes clear in Maine law that women and their doctors can make reproductive health care decisions. A sentiment that Governor Mills believes is supported by the majority of Maine people.

Thank you and I would be happy to take your questions.



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