

Senator Anne Carney, Representative Matt Moonan, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for holding space today for this vital issue.

I'm Shannon Carr, a board certified Ob-Gyn with subspecialty fellowship training in family planning. I'm based in Maine and have worked in another state helping people and families through later abortion procedures.

I'm not going to resort to customary proabortion rhetorical maneuvers. This is a hard conversation we're having today. I get it. In the very uncommon event that someone presents later in pregnancy for an abortion, I'm asking that you please try to understand that something has gone terribly wrong. Something tragic has happened to the baby, something life-changing has happened in the pregnant person's life. Further, and more so today, a myriad of nearly insurmountable barriers to abortion access push pregnancies later and later in gestation. These people find themselves in one of the worst life circumstances that they never could have imagined and are facing one of the hardest decisions they've ever had to make. Good decisions are often not easy ones, and these folks must grapple with, hold, and honor conflicting deeply held truths and beliefs.

Unless you've been in this situation yourself, as a patient or family member, or have cared for people who seek this uncommon but necessary lifesaving healthcare, it's nearly impossible to understand the gravity of decision-making and grief that these people are experiencing.

The folks facing these previously unimaginable circumstances later in pregnancy need this safe, time-sensitive compassionate and necessary care. When I've met with patients before, during, and after their later abortion process, we've cried together and shared in the profound sadness and confusion that can follow and have talked about ways to move forward. And rather than regret, my patients have expressed heartfelt gratitude about having been able to get the care that they and their families needed.

I'm asking everyone here today to try and suspend your ideology, and that we don't oversimplify this issue. These are very personal sensitive decisions and medical decisions that should be private and shared between patients and providers. These decisions are complicated and nuanced. We all live complicated and nuanced lives, don't we?

Abortion restrictions and outright bans always have and always will hurt the most vulnerable among us. We can do better in Maine. This is a hard conversation, I get it. Let's allow Maine to be a place where people can have these hard conversations and get the care that they very much need and deserve.