



STATE OF MAINE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SPEAKER'S OFFICE  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002  
(207) 287-1300

RACHEL TALBOT ROSS  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

*Testimony of Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross supporting*  
**LD 780, RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the  
Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive  
Autonomy**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary*

Good morning Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and esteemed members of the Committee on the Judiciary. I am Representative Rachel Talbot Ross of Portland. I represent House District 118 which is the Portland peninsula and I have the distinct honor of serving as the Speaker of the House. I stand before you today to express my strong support of LD 780, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy.

Today is January 22, marking the 51st anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the decision that protected a woman's constitutional right to choose. This case reaffirmed basic principles of equality, reinforced the fundamental right to privacy, and resolved that people in this country could control their own destinies — making deeply personal decisions free from political interference.

However, as we are all well aware, the protections afforded in that case were rolled back in 2022 when a conservative majority on the Supreme Court overturned Roe and the results across the country have been devastating. Today, trailblazers who fought heroically for the Roe v. Wade decision are watching the next generation grow up without its protections.

Millions of women now live in States with extreme bans on abortion, many without exceptions for rape and incest, or, where doctors can be jailed for providing reproductive care. And the reality of who is bearing the brunt of these consequences? Those that already shoulder the burden of inequality.

They are people of color, people struggling financially, people living in rural areas and other vulnerable populations. They are the people that are already the least able to navigate a complicated, expensive and stigmatized system of care.

It has been made clear that laws can be repealed, however strong they are. The fate of laws is determined election to election and subject to the shifting winds of politics. Despite the gains we've made, the laws we've passed are not guaranteed past the next election. And that is why we are here today and why this legislation is so critical. Ultimately, Maine voters deserve the opportunity to weigh in and affirm that Maine's constitution protects reproductive rights.

Abortion is a deeply personal and often complex choice, and everyone deserves the right to make decisions about their own body without undue interference. As are all personal, private medical decisions regarding their reproductive healthcare, including when to start a family, whether to use birth control or to receive abortion care. A constitutional amendment explicitly recognizing and protecting the right to reproductive care would signify our commitment to upholding the principles of bodily autonomy and personal freedom.

State constitutions are intended to protect fundamental human rights, and as you have heard, we believe that our state constitution as written protects the right to reproductive autonomy. But with recent decisions coming out of the US Supreme Court that imperil or revoke our federal rights—from birth control to abortion care—it's more important than ever that our state constitution is unambiguous. This amendment would make it explicit: **reproductive rights are fundamental human rights.**

There are many speakers to follow that will share their personal stories with you. People of all ages, from all across this state, from different income levels, from all different backgrounds who are urging us all to do the right thing and send this initiative out to the voters. I urge you to vote yes, to meet this moment and do all we can to protect the rights, freedoms, health and safety of Mainers.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.