



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese

Written testimony in opposition to 780 –
*RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine
to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy*

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 780. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 48 parishes, it has nine elementary schools, one private elementary school, one diocesan high school and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish. Within the diocese, there are also seven subsidized housing units, four rehabilitation and residence facilities, and two child-care centers. There are three Catholic hospitals operating independently of the diocese as well as Catholic Charities Maine, the state's largest social service agency, which operates as a separate corporation.

It comes as no surprise to any legislator or any member of the public that the Diocese of Portland vehemently opposes this law. Respect for unborn human life is the foundation of the Church's constant social teaching and social justice ministries.

However, there are numerous reasons why LD 780 is an unprecedented attack on life. A proposed constitutional amendment to enshrine abortion into the Maine constitution is immoral and unnecessary. This is a political attempt to distract from the heinous law passed last June that eliminated any restrictions for abortion.

A change to the constitution to promote abortion on demand will affect unborn children who cannot speak for themselves but will suffer the ultimate price. Pope Francis reminds us that this is evil and on its most basic level is “the termination of human life in the maternal womb, in the name of safeguarding other rights.”

Current Maine law is broad and expansive. It is one of the most permissive states in the country already.¹

In Maine, one does not need to be a doctor to perform an abortion²; one does not need to have an ultrasound; abortion clinics are not required to have safety inspections; taxpayers are forced to pay for abortions; providers are not required to have admitting privileges at a hospital, in case something goes wrong; and there is no waiting period.³ There is no clear parental consent required, it is an adult involvement law.⁴

In summary, if this constitutional amendment becomes law, all safeguards for a mother and child are at risk.

Please vote LD 780 as Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine

¹ <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2023/07/19/politics/janet-mills-signs-maine-abortion-law-xoasq1i29i/>

² <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/maine-abortion-law-bill-doctor-janet-mills-healthcare-a8953236.html>

³ <https://www.maine.gov/ag/docs/Abortion%20Rights%20in%20Maine.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.abortionfinder.org/abortion-guides-by-state/abortion-in-maine>