

Statement of Tim Russell, resident of Sidney, Maine, in Opposition to L.D. 780, A RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy, January 22, 2024.

I'm here today testifying in strong opposition to LD-780.

The first enumerated right is "life," as designated in both the Declaration of Independence, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness,*" and the US Constitution, 14th-amendment, Section 1, "*No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.*", and lastly, Maine's Constitution, Article I, Section 1. "*All people are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness.*"

There is already a law in Maine (LD 1619) eliminating any practical limits on abortions, thus legalizing the killing of an unborn child up to birth. Which makes this proposed resolution totally unnecessary.

To try and amend Maine's Constitution, for a woman to kill her unborn child by simply asserting a so-called right to personal reproductive autonomy, creates an unbounded opportunity for abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy (and perhaps beyond), is a recipe for disaster, and will certainly bring a multitude of unintended consequences. Abortion is not a fundamental right, no matter how you attempt to spin the wording to make it more palatable.

Lastly, and most important, the passage of this Resolution could very well jeopardize healthcare worker's rights by infringing on their rights of conscience and religious exercise guaranteed by the First Amendment and Federal Law. Specifically, the conscience provisions contained in 42 U.S.C. 300a-7 (collectively known as the "Church Amendments") and the Public Health Service Act Sec. 245, The Coats-Snowe Amendment [42 U.S.C. 238n]

If you truly care about women's health and bodily autonomy this constitutional resolution would be to recognize the unborn child as a unique individual in every aspect and deserving of life and person-hood in their own right; by providing women the necessary support to achieve this end. Not the destruction of innocent life as proposed by this Resolution.

I respectfully, but strongly, urge this committee to unanimously vote LD-780, out of committee Ought Not To Pass!

Thank you for your time and attention.