

Statement of Abbie Strout-Bentes, Executive Director, Safe Abortions for Everyone (SAFE)
Maine, to the Judiciary Committee in support of LD 780 RESOLUTION, Proposing an
Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy

January 22, 2024

LD 780 Ought to Pass

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and the members of the joint standing committee on Judiciary, my name is Abbie Strout-Bentes. I am the executive director of Maine's abortion fund called Safe Abortions for Everyone (SAFE). Our organization offers financial support to people who are from or live in Maine and those who are traveling to Maine to ensure they are able to access the abortion care they need.

I am here in support of LD 780, Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy.

Today, on the 51 Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, and about a year and a half since the Dobbs decision that overturned it, I am thinking about Yeniifer Alvarez-Estrada Glick,¹ I am thinking of her family and her community. She was a 27-year-old woman from Texas who died in 2022 due to the complications of a high-risk pregnancy. We will never know if she would have chosen an abortion to save her own life, but we know she was not given the option. No one explained to her how much her life was at risk due to her pregnancy, and we know an abortion could have saved her life.

I am thinking of Brittany Watts,² who was denied care at a religious hospital in Ohio when her water broke too early for her pregnancy to survive and then was arrested when she miscarried at home.

I am thinking of the nearly 1 in 5 abortion seekers³ who are forced to travel outside of the state they live in to access a common, normal, and sometimes life-saving medical procedure.

¹ <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/01/15/abortion-high-risk-pregnancy-yeni-glick>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/03/us/brittany-watts-ohio-miscarriage-abortion.html>

³ <https://www.guttmacher.org/2023/12/high-toll-us-abortion-bans-nearly-one-five-patients-now-traveling-out-state-abortion-care>

I am thinking of the thousands of women whose lives and futures were lost due to unsafe and illegal abortions before the Roe decision in 1973.⁴

We are currently witnessing an all-out assault on abortion access across the United States. And it is devastating.

Here in Maine, our leaders have listened to the majority of us who support the right to abortion and made significant progress to ensure all Mainers can access abortion care when they need it. But these laws are not guaranteed past the next election. And that is scary.

It is clear: the right to access abortion is not only about our health and well-being; it is about our lives and our futures.

The Gender Equity Policy Institute published a spotlight report last year called *The State of Reproductive Health in the United States*⁵, where they compared reproductive health disparities in the years leading up to the overturn of Roe (2015-2021) and their report can be summed up in this one statement:

“On every indicator, pregnant people, women, and their children have healthier outcomes in states that are supportive of reproductive freedom.”

It's more important than ever that our state constitution is crystal clear regarding reproductive freedom. This amendment would make it explicit: reproductive rights are fundamental human rights.

SAFE Maine supports LD 780 and we urge you to support it as well.

Thank you!

⁴ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Roe-Report-Part-I-2.pdf>

⁵ <https://thegepi.org/state-of-reproductive-health-united-states/>