

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Charlie Hartman, and I live in Vassalboro. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 780.

When I was in my mid-20s, a gynecologist put me on a hormone pill to treat intense pain during my period. The treatment stopped my periods and took care of the problem, and the doctor said when I was ready to get pregnant, I could stop taking the pills and my periods would start again. The pills had serious side-effects, though, including mini-strokes in my brain that caused memory loss and aphasia, but the doctor told me to remain on the med because, "With women, you never know whether the medicine is causing the problem, or if it's just you." It is an indicator of how seriously my brain was compromised that I simply accepted his judgment and kept taking the pills.

At the time, I was a student at Stanford Medical Center. The prescription, however, affected my academic performance. I couldn't remember what I was learning, I could not write notes because my pen would write something different from what I was thinking, and once I treated a patient's right knee instead of her left, even though her left knee was the one with the bandages on it. I was soon dismissed from the program. At this point, I realized I needed a new doctor.

I went to a new gynecologist for a routine checkup. To my shock, she told me I was eight weeks pregnant. I told her about what the doctor said and the meds I was taking, and she explained that just because I didn't have periods didn't mean I couldn't get pregnant. And then she told me that because of the meds I had been taking, the chances of the fetus being viable were very slim. It was devastating to discover – at the same time – that I was pregnant and that the fetus probably wasn't viable. The doctor offered me an appointment, and I chose to have the procedure.

I had insurance at the time, and it covered the abortion, but after being asked recently what I would have done if the insurance hadn't paid for it, I was shaken. I would not have been able to afford the abortion, and I would probably have carried the fetus until I either miscarried or delivered a stillborn.

Just thinking about this is very painful, but I cannot even imagine what I would have gone through if I couldn't afford to get the abortion I needed. Reproductive healthcare is as much a human right as any other kind of healthcare, and there is no rational reason to deny women access to it.

Please Vote Ought to Pass on LD 780. Thank you.