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LD 780

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, I'm Dahlia Verrill, I live in Falmouth, and I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 780.

I am made up of 206 bones, two eyes, over 100,000 hair follicles, but I cannot call them mine. Through a series of nerves connecting my brain to my body, I am able to move and speak, I have the capacity to feel pain, a capability to see, taste, smell, and hear. I can think independently and move freely, and above all, I have the potential to procreate an entire new life. But what differentiates the prior bodily processes from the latter, lies in autonomy; the presence of free will, of independence, of control. Since our elementary years we have been lectured on protecting our privacy, all to strip it away as the outcome of one decision which erased almost 50 years of standing precedent. Now, we are challenged with how to move forward, how to protect what little jurisdiction we have left. To attempt to bring the question of federally protected reproductive rights back to the same court of judges who decided against it just one year ago, seems rather counterproductive; but we cannot wait any longer. Instead, efforts by Maine legislators and residents must be made to amend our state constitution in protection of abortion rights at the local level.

Despite the majority of residents voting for the republican nominee in four out of the six presidential elections since 2000, with two-thirds of their congressional representatives aligning with the republican party, and a 4-3 republican majority in the state's supreme court, Ohio constituents still voted to amend their state constitution to protect an individual's right to "make and carry out one's own reproductive decisions." State by state legalization has been a more hopeful method of widespread protection in other cases as well. The decriminalization of marijuana has been successful in three-fifths of US states, despite being federally criminalized. Slowly but surely, the legalization of weed has become largely accepted by lawmakers and will presumably continue among those who have yet to, paving the road as a possible successful method of abortion protection.

I am sixteen years old and when I contemplate my future; where to go to college, where

to start my career, where to raise my children, the decision is not as hard anymore. After the Dobbs v. Jackson ruling, the list of states in which I may reside has become more limited. How am I, someone almost ten years out from being able to legally rent a car, trusted more to raise and care for an entire new life form than to rectify a situation in which I do not hold the material means nor the wisdom or experience to carry out? By stripping us of this freedom, we are showing women once again that we are simply vehicles for conception; mere skeletons used as breeding grounds for political strategy. When sovereignty over our own bodies is robbed, what is left to call our own? How can we continue to raise the future generation of girls to be powerful and deserving women while simultaneously telling them that they cannot even be trusted with their own body? The overturning of Roe v. Wade was an agonizing defeat of womanhood, but it cannot stop us from continuing the fight for ourselves, our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, for generations of women to come. Through state by state protection, there is still hope in a country where our autonomy is ours to keep.