

Testimony in support of LD 780, “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy”

January 22, 2023

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Ellie Sato, a Gorham resident. I am here to speak in support of LD 780, “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy.”

As a young Mainer, childbirth scares me. From the complications that can arise during pregnancy, to the health risks posed by the trauma of labor, finally to the issues that can arise postpartum, there is always a risk of death for the person pregnant. Having children is a joy, but it is also a transformative life change that can have devastating consequences. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control, maternal mortality has increased from 7.2 deaths per 100,000 births in 1987 to 17.6 deaths per 100,000 births in 2019¹. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue indicated by statistics from 2021, when there were 32.9 deaths per 100,000 births². For people of color, particularly for Black Americans, the risk is far higher, at 69.9 deaths per 100,000 births in 2021.

That’s why the Dobb’s decision in 2022 solidified my fears. Not only is the risk of maternal death increasing, but the Supreme Court has also eliminated a federal safeguard for abortion services that provide essential health care for those who can become pregnant³.

If and when I reach this decision in my life, I want to be able to have access to affordable health care services in case anything goes wrong. But right now, these necessary services are under attack. Abortion care is health care, and without these services, having children may not be a decision I’m willing to make in the future.

I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on this legislation. Having this right enshrined in our State’s Constitution would ensure that I—and others facing a similar dilemma—can have confidence in our ability to access health care services that would save lives. Given the latest attacks on this fundamental right, it is up to the State to ensure that federal regressions don’t decide our fate as Mainers.

Thank you for your consideration, and I’m happy to answer questions.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>.

²

[https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.htm#:~:text=In%202021%2C%201%2C205%20women%20died,20.1%20in%202019%20\(Table\).](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.htm#:~:text=In%202021%2C%201%2C205%20women%20died,20.1%20in%202019%20(Table).)

³ <https://www.acog.org/advocacy/abortion-is-essential/come-prepared/abortion-access-fact-sheet>.