

Statement of Dr. Julia McDonald to the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

January 22, 2024

LD 780 Ought to Pass

Senator Carney, Representative Moonan, and members of the joint standing committee on Judiciary, thank you for hearing my testimony today.

*My name is Dr. Julia McDonald. I am a full spectrum family medicine physician at a community hospital nearby, an abortion provider at Maine Family Planning, and the Medical Director of Abortion Services at Mabel Wadsworth Center in Bangor. I also serve as faculty at one of this state's medical residency programs and am professor at two medical schools. I am a Colby alumna who also attended the University of Maine system, then, on a scholarship from FAME Maine, went to medical school and earned my Master of Public Health in this state. I completed a fellowship with Physicians for Reproductive Health, authored a national abortion training curriculum, and I sit on the board of the National Abortion Federation. I also work as an international humanitarian with Doctors without Borders.*

I provide prenatal care, contraception, gender affirming care, and abortions here in Maine and around the world. As a physician, I know that some things remain constant over time: people have sex. People want to plan and time their pregnancies. Contraception can help families space pregnancies. And, even with perfect contraception and timing, unintended, unplanned, or *unhealthy pregnancies occur, and safe abortion care is necessary. I have found these truths to be self-evident, regardless of state, country, or law. But, I've also seen that lawmakers change who then change laws. Recently, changing laws have created a wave of restrictions across our country.*

After the Supreme Court reversed *Roe v Wade*, I worked in New Mexico, taking care of patients who had to travel hundreds of miles from banned states to access abortion care. Because of a change of law, they no longer have freedom within their home states. I see the same trend in

my international work: Regardless of restrictive or supportive laws, people seek sexual and reproductive healthcare. It is a human need and, I believe, an inalienable human right.

I know that children, families, and communities are healthier when people have autonomy over their bodies: when they can use contraception, decide the timing of their pregnancies, and access the health care that they need. I am so proud to live and work in a state that has a long *history of supporting individuals' rights to sex education, gender affirming care, contraception, abortion care.* I'm proud – and grateful – for the work that was done during the last session to expand sexual and reproductive health care. In a changing political landscape with an uncertain future, our next step is to secure these freedoms into our state constitution. I encourage you to support LD780. If we do not achieve the necessary votes in the Senate and House, we can put the issue to Maine voters to decide. We know that Mainers overwhelmingly support the right to abortion care. This amendment would do more than simply assert Mainers' right to abortion: it *would ensure future Mainers have the right to full personal, bodily autonomy, which includes the right to get pregnant when they want, to carry a pregnancy and receive excellent, patient centered prenatal care, to have an abortion or not have an abortion, to use contraception, to use assisted reproductive technology, and to access gender affirming care, among other freedoms.* We know that Mainers support freedom. Let's provide stronger protection for liberty and freedom with a constitutional amendment. Please vote Ought to Pass for LD 780.

*Thank you,*

Julia L. McDonald, DO, MPH

Augusta, Maine