

LD 780 testimony
ME Filon
22 January 2024

Good Morning Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is MaryElizabeth Filon. I reside in Falmouth, Maine. I am a mother to two children, I have been pregnant three times, I am currently pursuing my Master of Public Health, and I am a trainee of the Reproductive Health Leadership Program at UNE.

I am here today to ask you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 780 thus allowing the people of Maine, your constituents, to decide on amending Maine's constitution, declaring every person the right to personal reproductive autonomy. Legislation is subjected to the composition of the legislature; an amendment reflects the will of the people.

I was afforded the liberty to make decisions regarding my reproductive health and wellness during the whole of my viable reproductive years. I was able to choose if or when I wanted to start or stop birth control. I was able to decide which type of birth control was best suited for my body. I was able to choose if or when I wanted to become pregnant. And I was able access abortion one day before the cutoff date when a difficult diagnosis revealed fetal anomalies incompatible with life.

I never doubted that I would be able to make decisions about my medical care. Now, post *Dobbs*, this is not the case. For the first time a federal constitutional right was revoked, with the Supreme Court punting reproductive protections to the electorate of the states. My daughter is not afforded the same assurance of reproductive autonomy nor access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare.

The concept of reproductive autonomy, a component of medical autonomy, aligns with the principles of individual freedom and the liberty to make personal decisions about one's health and body. Self-determination in reproductive choices is an important construct of autonomy; reproductive autonomy is transformative allowing cis-women, transgender, and non-binary people control over decisions about choice, spacing, number, and continuation of pregnancy, as well as decisions about gender affirming healthcare.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals address the importance of reproductive autonomy through Target 5.6.1: to ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, allowing people aged 15-49 the right to make informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive, and comprehensive reproductive health care including abortion. Informed decision making includes individual consideration of the impact of social determinants of health. LD 780 allows people to assess personal readiness within the context of health: defined by the World Health Organization as just not the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, social, and mental wellbeing. Stressors including healthcare deserts, housing, transportation, economic status, education, chronic disease, systemic racism, employment, and relationship violence are known risk factors for adverse reproductive health outcome. Reproductive autonomy allows for individual choice in the context of social determinants that shape an individual's life.

LD780 also alleviates the threat of civil and legal penalties related to uncertainty over providing comprehensive reproductive healthcare. This will encourage a robust and competent healthcare workforce in our state.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 780. Mainers deserve to decide.