



January 22, 2024

Honorable Senator Carney and Representative Moonen and the members of the Judiciary Committee-

My name is Rev. Christine Dyke, I am the Lead Minister at First Parish Church UCC in Gorham. First Parish is a progressive Christian church in the United Church of Christ.

I am here today to testify **in support** of LD 780, SP0339, the **Proposed Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy**.

This is an important topic for people of faith. We do not want to enshrine our beliefs as legislation. Rather, we want the freedom to struggle with difficult decisions to remain with the person whose who has the responsibility to make such a decision.

Autonomy is dignity. Autonomy is the affirmation that we are fully capable of making decisions, including complex decisions. In the stories of the Christian faith Jesus repeatedly returns dignity and autonomy to those who have been excluded by religious and governmental rules because of gender, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Dignity is not based on the adherence to others' ideas of right and wrong, but rather the acknowledgement that we all have bodily autonomy which includes reproductive autonomy. Dignity is self-respect that appreciates the gravity of a situation. It saddens me that dignity and autonomy are not understood to be a pillar of this state and of this country. To declare such in the Maine Constitution will help us live into this basic tenet of humanity.

I believe that we all are given the ability to gather the resources we need to make important decisions. Medical experts, family, friends, and faith communities are resources that can be used to make an informed decision. Taking away this important experience of weighing a decision is to deny a person's humanity.

We are a country where people are assured of the freedom of and from religion, and I ask you to pass this amendment so that the interpretation by some religious groups do not become the law for all. Enshrining autonomy allows all to have the liberty to live out the life each of us has been given.

Thank you