

January 22, 2024

Good day, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Dr. Norma Dreyfus and I am a retired Pediatrician from Arrowsic, speaking in support of LD 780, *Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy*. My career as a physician spanned a pre-Roe world and a post-Roe world. We are now at a crossroads, where each state must separately determine whether women and their families will have agency over their own lives when it comes to reproductive health, or whether their life's timeline and goals can be undermined by the State.

I can tell you that the pre-Roe world was not pretty. Yes, if you had the funds and your life and ambitions were turned upside down because of a pregnancy, you could make things right again by traveling to a place where a safe legal abortion could be obtained. BUT, if you didn't have the funds and were desperate to protect yourself and not upend your family, it was likely that you obtained an illegal abortion or attempted one on yourself. I witnessed this desperation from women on what was called at the time a "septic abortion ward", filled with sick and often dying patients who were—as my colleague Dr. David Bingham once wrote—"convinced that abortion was their best choice in a world that left them nothing but difficult choices."

A foundational precept of health care is a commitment from a physician to endeavor to do what is best for a patient, driven by the latter's own values and beliefs. This is especially true with reproductive health care. A patient's decisions must not be driven or circumscribed by a political agenda. At present, Maine law protects the rights of an individual to determine her own reproductive future. That law, however, can be changed with each new legislature.

As a physician dedicated to the best interests and welfare of my patients, I can't imagine how it would feel to tell them, "Sorry I can't help you this year. If you had come last year, things would have been different but the Maine legislature changed hands." Let's place Maine women's health care permanently in their own hands. Take the first step by voting Ought To Pass on LD 780 to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot this November and let the people decide.

Respectfully,
Dr. Norma Dreyfus
Arrowsic, Maine