

3/26/25

Hello representatives,

My name is Sam LeBlanc, and I'm a mental health counselor living and working in Portland. I'm writing to share my opposition to all of the bills currently on the docket for the March 28th judiciary public hearing: LD 253, LD 682, LD 886, LD 887, LD 975, LD 1007, and LD 1154.

These bills all seek to eradicate or create significant barriers to vital healthcare. And frankly, I do not believe that the arguments put forth to support these initiatives are made in good faith.

If our representatives truly care about protecting life, I believe they would not be focusing on abortion. They would be advocating for housing for all, healthcare for all, food security, and myriad other programs that support the basic necessities of life, let alone the things that support a healthy populace: education, the arts, access to the outdoors, and so on. These bills seek to force a person to have a baby, but then leave both the birthing parent and the baby without the necessary supports for a stable and healthy life. If life was actually so sacred to these representatives, I believe their focus would be elsewhere.

Next, these bills do not reflect effective measures to reduce abortion rates. Research shows that abortion restrictions do not lower the rates of abortion ([Nedelman, 2018](#)) There is a much more logical method of reducing the number of abortions—reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies. If legislators actually wanted to reduce rates, they would be fighting for comprehensive sex education and increasing access to contraceptives. Since education and access to contraception is not the focus of these bills, it follows that reducing the number of abortions is not at the heart of these representatives' motivations.

My next thought is that these representatives wish to protect their religious values. I fully support their right and the rights of all people to practice the religion of their choice. If these representatives do not support abortion, I say, "no problem—don't get an abortion!" But inflicting that belief on all Mainers not only denies bodily autonomy for all, it denies the right of everyone to practice the religious beliefs of their choice, even and especially when that religion is not the religion of our representatives. The hypocrisy of this particular argument is transparent.

Lastly, there's talk of protecting birthing people from the impacts of abortion. Research shows that health outcomes are far worse for people who are denied access to abortion versus people who have access. Longitudinal studies show that people who are denied abortions:

1. reported more anxiety symptoms and stress, lower self-esteem, and lower life satisfaction than those who received one
(Ralph, L. J., et al., *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Vol. 171, No. 4, 2019).
2. have more physical health problems
(Ralph, L. J., et al., *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Vol. 171, No. 4, 2019).

3. face more economic hardships, including worse credit scores, more frequent bankruptcies and evictions, and a higher chance of living in poverty (The harms of denying a woman a wanted abortion, ANSIRH, 2020).
4. are more likely to stay linked to a violent partner or to raise children alone (The harms of denying a woman a wanted abortion, ANSIRH, 2020).

And if impacts to birthing people are not compelling enough, the impacts to the child are significant as well:

1. "The children born as a result of abortion denial are more likely to live in poverty and they are more likely to experience poor bonding with their mothers" (Biggs, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/09/news-facts-abortion-mental-health>)
2. These children face a range of social, emotional, and mental health problems that continue into adulthood, including more psychiatric hospitalizations than their peers (David, H. P., *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 14, No. 27, 2006; Dagg, P. K., *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 148, No. 5, 1991).
3. Based on the data about people denied abortions, it follows that these children are also more likely to be raised by single parents or in households with domestic violence.

In the end, I'm left with the sense that our representatives simply seek power and control. If you have control over more than half of the population's bodily autonomy, you can make their lives small. You cause people to live in fear and hope that they accept archaic and misogynistic gender roles, and thus reify Republican values. There may even be economic motivations—I could even imagine this as an effort to forcibly increase population growth and thus the workforce.

I staunchly oppose all bills that seek to limit, eradicate, criminalize, or create barriers to abortion. I fear that the appearance of these bills in the state of Maine is a result of our representatives feeling emboldened by the undemocratic actions of our current administration. While the Democratic majority is likely to squash these bills, I believe it is vital to speak out firmly against this type of legislation so that our representatives know that Mainers will not stand for such threats to bodily autonomy and religious freedom. More broadly, I want it to be known that Mainers are a hardy and willful bunch, and we will not stand for such threats to our democracy, nor will we stand by and allow our rights to be stripped from us.