

Good morning committee members,

My name is Laken Fournier. I am here today to speak in opposition to LD 975. I am a lifelong Mainer. I am a fisherman's daughter. I am college educated. I am a homeowner. I am a loving wife. I am a devoted step-mother. And I am a pickle hater.

I started craving pickles shortly after Christmas in 2021. My husband instantly recognized this strange phenomenon and rushed off to buy me a pregnancy test. I remember the horror I felt as the blue plus stared back at me, indicating a positive result. When I walked into the kitchen to inform my husband, he gave me a hug and told me we would handle it together. This is the crossroads for many people who find themselves pregnant. For me, the answer about which path to take has always been a certain one. I don't want to endure pregnancy. I never have.

Having an abortion was an easy decision for me. It was easy to find a facility. It was easy to understand my options. I could go through with the pregnancy in the county with highest maternal mortality rights of any developed nation. I could give the resulting child up for adoption in a state where 4 children died in DHHS custody in the year 2021. Or I could have an abortion, and likely experience painful cramping and heavy menstrual bleeding for a week or so. My choice had already been made - hence the appointment at the clinic. It was easy to say "no thank you," when asked if I wanted to see my fetus during my inter-vaginal ultrasound. It was easy - AND SAFE - to take the mifepristone. For some women, this is not an easy choice. For many women, this is something they will carry with them for a long time. For too many, it is a choice they make for their own health, safety, even their own life. Ultimately though, it is their choice. It is a personal choice made due to a multitude of outside factors. It is a choice no form of government has business being involved in.

I am lucky in that regard. I am lucky that I found out early. I am lucky that the choice was an easy one. I am lucky that I have a partner who supports me. I am lucky that this all happened 6 months before the overturning of Roe Vs. Wade. I am lucky that even if this had happened some time between June 2022 to present day, I live in Maine, where abortion bans don't have the ability to reach me. At least not yet.

I was going to give a statement with a lot more statistical data. I mean, I *have* a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and a background in mental health and education. But I've been watching people give statements at public hearings like this one for almost three years now. I have watched people be shamed by their representatives; their facts and data dismissed

again and again. So, if government officials don't want to listen to statistical data sourced from the CDC, World Health Organization, or the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecology, I think it's safe to assume anything I could say, regardless of flawless source material and impassioned energy, isn't going to tip the scales for any of you. So I decided to stand up and tell my story because I refuse to do nothing.

Women have died because their right to reproductive healthcare was taken away from them by bills similar to LD 975. Josseli Barnica, of Texas, who was in the process of miscarrying her daughter's sibling at 17 weeks, died because doctors had to wait until there was no heartbeat to perform the procedure that would stave off infection and save her life. Candi Miller, of Georgia, who feared punishment under her state's strict abortion laws, ordered abortion medication online and died in her home because the routine dilation and curettage procedure (D&C) needed to complete her abortion, and the medication she had taken earlier, had recently been criminalized in Georgia. She leaves behind three children. Amber Nicole Thurman, also of Georgia, who did seek medical care after taking abortion medication, wondered what would happen to her six year old son while she waited for 20 hours while doctors decided whether or not to perform a now criminalized D&C. She died because they waited too long. These women will never get the chance to speak their stories. My story is a simple one. I had a pickle craving. I had an abortion. I have no regrets. That's as complicated as my story gets and I am grateful for that every day. This is the story I will tell my stepdaughter. I'll also tell her about being here today. I won't tell her I remained complicit when the government tried to rob her of the healthcare all people with the ability to conceive deserve. I will tell her I tried - that I did at least something. So in short I urge this committee. Please. Do not take that choice away. Do not pass LD 975. Protect reproductive healthcare.