

Good morning,

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Ariel Sides and I live in Gardiner. I am here today in opposition of LD 975.

I come before you today to share a deeply personal story that underscores the profound impact legislative decisions have on the lives of individuals and families within our state.

In October of 2023, just five days after relocating from South Dakota to Maine, I faced a life-threatening medical condition known as an ectopic pregnancy, where the embryo implants outside the uterus. This condition is not only non-viable but also poses a severe risk to the mother's health. After thorough consultation with medical professionals, it became clear that terminating the pregnancy, and quickly, was the only option to save my life. This decision, while difficult, allowed me to continue being a mother to my two living children, who depend on me each day.

Reflecting on this experience, I am acutely aware of how fortunate I was to have access to the necessary medical care here in Maine. In South Dakota, where I had previously resided, the legal landscape surrounding abortion is markedly different. Following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in June of 2022, South Dakota began enforcing a trigger law that prohibits all abortion procedures except to preserve the life of the mother. While the law includes this exception, the ambiguity surrounding what qualifies as a "life-threatening" situation has led to significant uncertainty among healthcare providers. Reports indicate that some physicians feel "trapped" by the state's abortion trigger law, fearing legal repercussions even when a woman's health is at risk.

Had I still been in South Dakota during my medical crisis, I may have faced life-ending delays or denials in receiving the urgent care that I needed due to these legal

uncertainties. The thought that my access to life-saving treatment hinged on my geographic location is both alarming and unacceptable.

As a person of faith, this experience led me to reflect deeply on the intersection of my beliefs and the choices I had to make. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy Chapter 20, God commanded the Israelites to “utterly destroy” the Canaanites. He said to “not leave alive anything that breathes;” every man, woman, child and even livestock should be exterminated, not only to preserve the “morality” of the Israelites, but also as a form of “mercy,” whereas the Canaanite children could ascend to Heaven before reaching the “age of accountability,” as they were considered “heathen” otherwise. In light of this Scripture, I contemplated the nature of divine commands, and the responsibility entrusted to us in making such life-altering decisions and I have come to one conclusion; God must be pro-choice. The Bible presents instances where difficult choices are made for a greater purpose, emphasizing the importance of discernment and compassion.

I share my story today in light of a proposed bill, LD 975, “An Act to Repeal Laws Allowing Abortion and to Criminalize Abortion,” which seeks to repeal existing laws authorizing abortion in Maine and criminalize the procedure by redefining “human being” in the Maine Criminal Code to include all human beings from the moment of conception. Had such legislation been in place during my medical crisis, the necessary procedure to save my life might have been denied or even criminalized, leaving my children without a mother.

While I respect the deeply held beliefs that inform positions on this issue, I urge you to consider the real-life implications of LD 975. The bill’s broad language could endanger the lives of women facing medical emergencies like mine, where the

termination of a pregnancy is not a choice but a medical necessity.

In closing, I appeal to your sense of compassion, justice and common sense. Let us ensure that Maine's laws protect the health and lives of its citizens, allowing families to make critical medical decisions without the fear of criminalization. I urge you to oppose LD 975 and uphold the right to life-saving medical care for ALL women in our state.

Thank you.