

Mira Goldman
Pownal
LD 975

Good morning, members of the Committee, and thank you for this opportunity to speak in front of you today. My name is Mira Goldman, and I'm a junior at Freeport High School as well as a member of the school's Student Activist team. I am speaking today to strongly oppose LD 975, as well as all of the other bills presented today that seek to limit—or even fully eliminate—abortion access in Maine.

As a young woman, there has never before been a time in my life where I've been scared about the status of my rights in this state. I grew up understanding that Maine was a place where I'd always be protected, a place where women would always have the right to choose. Since at least 1973, we have been a state that has upheld that right without question. And in all honesty, that right should never be in question to begin with. Choice – a woman's ability to decide what is right for her, her body, and her life, should be up to her and her alone. It's terrifying to think about what would happen if the government began having a say in those decisions, and it's terrifying to think about what happens when a woman's life and decision-making is no longer under her control.

Abortion is essential healthcare. Those four words define why I am standing here today, as I'm sure they do for so many other people. Abortions are not something taken lightly by individuals or medical professionals. Very often, these procedures save women's lives.

I know that the sponsors and backers of this bill consider themselves to be "pro-life". But can you truly consider yourself to be a supporter of life if through laws and this legislature, you're seeking to endanger women's lives.

But it's more than that. What these bills seek to do—and let's be honest—is to force young women, often children themselves, to become mothers when they do not want to be mothers. These bills seek to remove young women's rights to grow up, to become the best people they can be, and to become, if they so wish, the best mothers they can be. Many young women faced with an unintended pregnancy choose to become mothers. But others know that they are not ready to assume a pregnancy, let alone the responsibility of a child. It is not moral, or right, to force a teenage girl to assume full responsibility for another human being when she knows she is not able to fulfil that responsibility. It's not moral, or right, to force a teenage girl to assume the role of a mother at age 15, 16, 17, 18, when there are so many other roles those girls wanted to earn first: a high school graduate, a college student, a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher. You, the members of this committee, the representatives chosen by their own peers to protect our rights, have no business *forcing* children to be parents to children.

I'm terrified both for myself and others. I'm terrified for those who are denied essential healthcare, and I'm terrified for those who would no longer be able to make decisions about their own life. I believe that Maine should remain the place it's been my whole life: a place where women's rights are respected and protected. I know that there are many people here today who agree with me, and I urge you to maintain these rights, to maintain a women's right to define her own life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.