

TO: Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, Members of  
Committee on Judiciary

DATE: March 28, 2025

RE: LD 253  
LD 975  
LD 682  
LD 886  
LD 887

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My name is Jaquel Rey, I'm a Waterville resident here today in opposition of LDs 253, 975, 682, 886, and 887.

In 1964, my great aunt Gerri Santoro died alone on the floor of a motel in Connecticut, after a botched illegal abortion. Her partner fled, leaving her to bleed to death. In 1973, a picture of my aunt Gerri's deceased body was published to Ms Magazine, slumped over and bloody on that motel room floor. Made public, this image was available for her daughters to witness, as well as her 13 siblings. The horror of recognizing the unnamed woman in the photo motivated my grandmother to fight for abortion rights until her death in 2021, determined to see a reality where no one would end up dead for lack of access to a safe and legal abortion.

This is our reality: Removing access to abortion doesn't stop people from seeking it. Instead, you'll have the blood of the parent on your hands as well as a fetus that will still never reach term.

60 years later, in August of 2024, I had an abortion. This wasn't a simple choice, and it was a difficult and painful experience. When I started hormone therapy in 2020, my provider did not explain that despite going through a masculine puberty and lacking a menstrual cycle, I could still get pregnant. I had been in a long term relationship for years since then, with no pregnancies. In July 2024, after weeks of overwhelming fatigue and nausea that caused me to start missing work in my apprenticeship, you can imagine my shock when my doctor told me I was pregnant.

Raising a child in Maine costs around \$13,000 annually, while I was earning less than \$24,492 a year on MaineCare. My run-down apartment alone cost \$18,000 a year. In Maine it's hard to get by without a vehicle - especially with a child - and mine cost around \$500 a month. I don't have family in Maine so I'd need to secure and pay for childcare to continue working in my trade, which already faces a shortage of skilled workers. What if I had a baby with birth defects caused by my medications or average lifestyle? How could I afford additional care if my child had special needs? The math simply didn't add up. I knew I couldn't afford a pregnancy that left me too sick to work, or the unplanned child that would result from it. My doctor offered resources if I

chose to carry the pregnancy, but I couldn't choose to leave another child to a system that's already overwhelmed. How could I ask my senior mother to make the sacrifices needed to raise a child into her 80s?

For all these reasons, I made the difficult choice to have an abortion.

If you remove access to safe and legal abortion, where are your plans to create a safety net for the resulting unplanned children? What legislation will provide support for long-term medical care for babies with birth defects and special needs? What financial relief will you provide to a parent who can't work due to a difficult pregnancy?

Senator Guerin, Senator Haggan, Rep Javner, Rep Griffin, Rep Lemelin, Rep Smith, Rep Harrington, Rep Carlow, Rep Quint, Rep Bernard, and Rep Paul- where's your open door to foster or adopt someone else's unplanned child if your plan is to force them to give birth? If you make the choice for a child to exist, the responsibility falls on you.

60 years after my great aunt Gerri died alone, we're still fighting to give people the much needed access to a safe and legal abortion. I will speak up for my rights, and for those that are no longer with us today because they were denied these same rights that you are seeking to strip Maine citizens of. I pray that in 60 years, the next generation won't need to fight the same battle.