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Testimony in opposition:

LD 1930, "An Act Regarding Acts of Violence Committed Against a Pregnant Woman"

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

May 19, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Laura Harper. I'm a senior associate at Moose Ridge Associates and I live in Hallowell. I am here today on behalf of my client, Maine Family Planning (MFP) to speak against LD 1930, "An Act Regarding Acts of Violence Committed Against a Pregnant Woman."

MFP provides comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care to teens and adults at 19 locations statewide. Our mission is to ensure that all people have access to high-quality, culturally relevant and affordable sexual and reproductive health care services, comprehensive sexual health education, and the right to control their sexual and reproductive lives.

We can all agree that physically assaulting a pregnant person and/or murdering a pregnant person is abhorrent and wrong. It is noteworthy that Maine's criminal law provides special treatment of those who knowingly cause harm to pregnant people. Additionally, victims of wrongful acts and families who have lost loved ones due to wrongful acts have recourse through civil action in the courts for battery, assault, negligence, wrongful death or other tort action. As a part of these actions, courts have discretion to consider the loss of a pregnancy and the emotional effects of that loss when awarding damages.

Unfortunately, LD 1930 seeks to establish a fetus as a legal entity separate and distinct from the pregnant person who carries it. This bill redefines the term "person" or "human being" in Maine's statutes addressing murder, manslaughter, assault, domestic violence assault, aggravated assault, elevated aggravated assault, domestic violence aggravated assault and domestic violence elevated aggravated assault to include a fetus from the moment of conception to birth. Similar legislation has been supported by groups opposed to abortion in an effort to further erode pregnant people's bodily autonomy. It is a new iteration of a decades-long, anti-abortion argument that the fetus is a separate person from the person who carries it, with separate rights. Cloaked in the guise of further justice for pregnant people, LD 1930 creates an unacceptable tension with the fundamental right to privacy protected by Maine's Reproductive Privacy Act, first passed in 1993<sup>1</sup> and then

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. 1993, c. 61

updated in 2023.<sup>2</sup> To quote from Title 22, MRSA §1598, "It is the public policy of the State that the State not restrict a woman's exercise of her private decision to terminate a pregnancy before viability except as provided in section 1597-A." Section 1597-A deals with consent to a minor's decision to have an abortion.

In closing, we ask you to please vote LD 1930, "ought not to pass." Maine law is clear when it comes to violence against pregnant people. Please don't abuse these protections in order to further an anti-abortion agenda. Thank you for your attention and I'm happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>2</sup> P.L. 2023, c. 416