

Good morning, Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services. My name is Charlie Hartman, and I live in Vassalboro. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2203.

When I was in my mid-20s, a gynecologist put me on a hormone pill to treat intense pain during my period. The treatment stopped my periods and took care of the problem, and the doctor said when I was ready to get pregnant, I could stop taking the pills and my periods would start again. The pills had serious side-effects, though, including mini strokes in my brain that caused memory loss and aphasia, but the doctor told me to remain on the med because, "With women, you never know whether the medicine is causing the problem, or if it's just you." It is an indicator of how seriously my brain was compromised that I simply accepted his judgment and kept taking the pills.

At the time, I was a student at Stanford Medical Center. The prescription, however, affected my academic performance. I couldn't remember what I was learning, I could not write notes because my pen would write something different from what I was thinking, and once I treated a patient's right knee instead of her left, even though her left knee was the one with the bandages on it. I was soon dismissed from the program. At this point, I realized I needed a new doctor.

I went to a new gynecologist for a routine checkup. To my shock, she told me I was eight weeks pregnant. I told her about what the doctor said and the meds I was taking, and she explained that just because I didn't have periods didn't mean I couldn't get pregnant. And then she told me that because of the meds I had been taking, the chances of the fetus being viable were very slim. It was devastating to discover – at the same time – that I was pregnant, and that the fetus probably wasn't viable. The doctor offered me an appointment, and I chose to have the procedure.

The pills the first gynecologist gave me were by prescription, and they were expensive. I was a poor student, and the cost of the pills reduced my food budget. Paying for contraceptives would also have meant less food. As far as the abortion

goes, I was not able to pay the fee for the new gynecologist, but she generously did not charge me. I would not have been able to afford the procedure, and I would have had to carry the fetus until I either miscarried or delivered a stillborn.

It seems to me obvious to me that women should be able to make all decisions about their own bodies. They should not have their decisions made for them by lack of income.

Please Vote Ought to Pass on LD 2203. Thank you.