

Kelley Barrett

Registered to vote in Blue Hill, ME

Honorable committee members and representatives,

I am writing in to state a resounding Ought to Pass for LD-227: An act regarding Health Care in the State. We as Mainers have always taken care of each other through thick and thin and right now, compassion and comprehensive affordable health care is VERY thin in our country. Gender affirming care and reproductive care, including abortions, is critical to the well being of our fellow Mainers, especially those of us under the age of 50. I ask you to please stop fearing words like abortion, and phrases like gender affirming and see through to what that actually means to a person who needs it.

Abortion means saving a life. It means that a woman whose pregnancy takes root in her fallopian tubes instead of her uterus can live to try again. It means that a woman whose soon-to-be-baby dies in the womb can survive that horrific tragedy. It means that a child who was sexually assaulted can have a normal life instead of being forced to bear a child when she's still in grade school. To only focus on the tiny handful of casual abortions and to fear and hate the term because of that is absolute cruelty and we are not a cruel people.

Gender affirming care means saving a life. It means that someone who has constantly felt at odds with how others see them can finally show people exactly who they truly are in a way that others will accept which can and has prevented many thousands of suicides. It means that a child who comes into puberty far too young for their body to handle the hormonal stresses can delay that until a more appropriate age and save their bodies and minds from considerable torment. It means that someone who has been overly blessed with a bosom can get breast reduction surgery and finally be free of back pain and possible spinal fractures. It means comfort and happiness instead of pain and torment and it is definitely not

restricted to transgender folks, though they will be the ones most strongly impacted by having gender affirming care denied.

Banning certain kinds of health care is a slippery slope. Banning funding for certain kinds of health care only puts further stress and burden on those who already have to deal with being poor and struggling to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads. Telling someone “never” for health care will lead to you being told “never” for health care that you need someday. I beg you. I plead with you. Choose kindness. Choose compassion. Choose life. And choose to let Mainers be the judges of their own medical needs for their own bodies. We have always operated under a ‘live and let live’ philosophy in Maine. Today is not the day to change that. This is why I testify for Ought to Pass.