



## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MAINE

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Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is John Hennessy and I represent the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. Please accept this testimony in **opposition** to LD 748, 825, 851, 915, 1225, and 1229.

Clergy throughout The Episcopal Church counsel women, men, and families who must make decisions relating to pregnancy and childbirth, adoption, family planning, and who face infertility. Our ordained and lay leaders walk alongside Episcopalians and others who struggle with this intimate and challenging aspect of human life. Over the past several decades, the General Convention has addressed the topic of abortion from a position informed by this ministry and personal lived experience of clergy and laity within their own families. As a result, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church recognizes the moral, legal, personal, and societal complexity of the issue. The diversity of views within the Church represents our common struggle to understand and discern this issue.

The Episcopal Church teaches that “all human life is sacred. Hence, it is sacred from its inception until death. The Church takes seriously its obligation to help form the consciences of its members concerning this sacredness. Human life, therefore, should be initiated only advisedly and in full accord with this understanding of the power to conceive and give birth which is bestowed by God.” Our liturgical text *Enriching Our Worship* calls for great pastoral sensitivity to the needs of the woman and others involved in decisions relating to “abortion, or mishaps of pregnancy and infertility.” This ministry is particularly important in situations that result in the loss of a pregnancy or inability to become pregnant and as a Church, we have experienced that all of these have “a tragic dimension.”

In a series of statements over the past decades, the Church has declared that “we emphatically oppose abortion as a means of birth control, family planning, sex selection, or any reason of mere convenience.” At the same time, since 1967, The Episcopal Church has maintained its “unequivocal opposition to any legislation on the part of the national or state governments which would abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions [about the termination of pregnancy] and to act upon them.”

The Church urges dioceses and congregations “to give necessary aid and support to all pregnant women.” General Convention “commends the work and mission of pregnancy care centers which stress unconditional love and acceptance, for women and their unborn children.” We have urged support of “local pregnancy care centers” that “develop an outreach of love to pregnant women and to mothers and their children.”

At the General Convention in [2018](#), The Episcopal Church called for “women’s reproductive health and reproductive health procedures to be treated as all other medical procedures.” The Convention declared “that equitable access to women’s health care, including women’s reproductive health care, is an integral part of a woman’s struggle to assert her dignity and worth as a human being.”

We continue to advocate that “legislating abortions will not address the root of the problem. We therefore express our deep conviction that any proposed legislation on the part of national or state governments regarding abortions must take special care to see that the individual conscience is respected, and that the responsibility of individuals to reach informed decisions in this matter is acknowledged and honored as the position of this Church.”

The Church also sees education as an essential component of engaging with issues relating to family planning, child spacing, adoption, infertility and abortion. The global Anglican Communion, of which The Episcopal Church is a member, first supported the use of contraceptives in 1930, and as Christians we affirm responsible family planning. General Convention policy [states](#) “it is the responsibility of our congregations to assist their members in becoming informed concerning the spiritual, physiological and psychological aspects of sex and sexuality.”

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### ***General Convention Resolutions***

[1976-D095](#) – Reaffirm the 1967 General Convention Statement on Abortion

[1982-B009](#) – Reaffirm the Church’s Guidelines on the Termination of Pregnancy

[1982-D016](#) – Reaffirm the Right to the Use of Artificial Conception Control

[1982-A065](#) – Condemn Use of Abortion for Gender Selection and Non-serious Abnormalities

[1988-D124](#) – Condemn Acts of Violence Against Abortion Facilities and Their Clients

[1988-C047](#) – Adopt a Statement on Childbirth and Abortion

[1988-A089](#) – Promote Use of Materials on Human Sexuality and Abortion for All Age Groups

[1991-C037](#) – Oppose Legislation Requiring Parental Consent for Termination of Pregnancy

[1991-A096](#) – Continue Discussion on the Use of Fetal Tissue for Research Use

[1994-D105](#) – Commend the Work of Pregnancy Care Centers

[1994-D091](#) – Deplore Practice of Forced Abortions and Sterilization in China

[1994-A054](#) – Reaffirm General Convention Statement on Childbirth and Abortion

[1994-D009](#) – Reaffirm Family Planning and Control of Global Population Growth

[1997-D065](#) – Express Grave Concern Over Misuse of Partial Birth Abortion

[2000-D104](#) – Affirm Adoption and Support Legislation on Adoption Counseling

[2018-D032](#) – Equal Access to Health Care Regardless of Gender

***Resolves of the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church***

[Opposition to the Human Life Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, 1981](#)

[Affirmation of the International Conference on Population and Development, 2004](#)

[Support for Women's Access to Healthcare, 2014](#)