

James Cook
The Audacity (of Rockland)
LD 975

Testimony regarding HP 635 / LD 975

Collected March 22, 2025 in Chapman Park, Rockland Maine

By James Cook, Facilitator of The Audacity: Creative Action Together
(audacityCAT.com)

The following is transcribed testimony of 34 residents of the state of Maine who are also members of The Audacity, a local grassroots group of individuals committed to taking nonviolent creative action together to respond to the wave of authoritarianism, bigotry, and corruption currently inundating the nation. We have no budget and operate entirely based on the contributions of our members.

The following testimony was taken in Chapman Park in Rockland, Maine on March 22, 2025, regarding efforts to criminalize abortion in Maine through the bill HP 635/LD 975, which explicitly describes itself as an act to criminalize Maine. A video record of this testimony is available for examination via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0zMRS3wbUU> online. The Audacity is submitting this record of testimony to the Maine State Legislature for the hearing in Augusta at the Maine State House on March 28, 2025 which is scheduled for the bill.

For questions regarding this testimony or documentation of the explicit consent provided by the people named below to have their words published online and transcribed and entered into legislative testimony, please contact James Cook of Camden, founder and facilitator of The Audacity, at jamescook@audacitycat.com.

Testimony of Susan Strane of Rockland

My name is Susan Strane. I live in Rockland Maine. I am protesting this piece of legislation because of my own personal experience in the early 1970s. I had just returned from the Peace Corps in Turkey. I was living in New York City. I became pregnant. It was illegal at the time. Without telling you how, there were arrangements made and I flew to Puerto Rico all by myself. I had an abortion and flew right back the same day. I had to use all my tuition money that I was going to use to go to the New School and I had to start all over again to save that money. It isn't right. It just isn't right. People and women need to have the freedom to determine their lives without an accident or an unplanned pregnancy ruining it for them.

Testimony of Shelley Kushner of Rockland

I'm Shelley Kushner. I live in Rockland, Maine. I want to protest LD 975. Abortion is health care. Health care for women should never be refused or made criminal. That's inexcusable in a civilized society. I have four kids -- one daughter, four granddaughters -- and there's a whole future out here of people that are depending on all of us to speak up. Thank you.

Testimony of Sheryl Dacso of Spruce Head

I'm Sheryl Dacso. I live at 41 Rock Ledge Road in Spruce Head, and I am here to object to the proposed legislation which would significantly impact women all over the state. I spent six years on the Board of Directors at Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast in Houston, Texas, and I want to tell you that it has been a terrible result, the result of women who have been dying because they have not been able to access care. Plus, many of these women are low income; they don't have the resources to travel to come to places like Maine where they can access care and have abortions. And I just think that if you want to avoid the worst outcome of a bill like this, and this is LD 975, you need to make sure that this bill does not pass. Thank you.

Testimony of Jane Schroeder of Rockland

My name is Jane Schroeder. I live here in Rockland, Maine, and I'm here to protest LD975. I am very much against it. A long, long time ago before I had my children, I had a miscarriage and had to go to the hospital for a D&C which today would be considered an abortion. I keep learning about women who are in this predicament and

doctors won't do the D&C to make sure that they're healthy again. So that's just one reason why I do not want LD975 to pass; this is for the health of women and babies, and I hope you understand that. Thank you.

Testimony of Emily Jenks of Thomaston

I'm Emily Jenks. I live in Thomaston, Maine and I support abortion rights and a woman's right to choose. I had an abortion and I had two young children. I was married and we did not want a third child. I specifically did not want a third child. My youngest was four years old I did not want to go back to everything that a pregnancy, delivery, having babies entails. My marriage was on the rocks; I didn't want to go through all that in my marriage again. And so I made the decision. I went up to Bangor to the Mabel Wadsworth Center (which is a great woman's care center, they are still there) and I took care of that, and my husband was there to support me and I've never looked back. I've never regretted it. That's just life; that's the way it happens. We can make these decisions and should be able to make these decisions for ourselves. Thank you.

Testimony of Natalia Ayala of Rockland

My name is Natalia Ayala, and I live in Rockland, Maine. I'm here to speak about a bill that's been brought before the main legislature, HP 635, which criminalizes abortion and states that a fetus is a human being at conception. Both of these are inherently anti-women and ultimately anti-child.

If you look at the state of Texas who which has already passed these types of laws, the death rates of women pregnant women have gone up at least 50%. In Georgia, they stopped recording how much damage has been done to pregnant women because of these type of abortion laws.

The real question is, one, do you believe women are human beings, do you believe that women have the same rights over their bodies that men do? Or do you not? Because it's not about life. If it was you would be taking care of the babies that already exist in this state, as opposed to trying to go after women.

Not to mention that medically speaking pregnancy is very, very complicated. The only decisions that should be made about any pregnancy should be between the woman affected and their doctor. The United States even before Roe vs. Wade was overturned had the worst maternal and infant mortality rates of the entire so-called "developed world," and they are plummeting even more.

As far as I can tell the legislature has no idea how women's bodies work, and they have no place in any of their medical decisions. Not to mention that women just have a right over their own bodies. Unless you're passing similar legislation over men's bodies, then this is just inherently a misogynist law. And I'm sorry, but a bundle of cells is not a human being. They can't survive outside. And anyone who's having a late term abortion is because of a medical reason. Nobody other, nobody else does that; that's nonsense. Thank you very much.

Testimony of Kathe Marion-Gallant of Waldoboro

My name is Kathe Marion-Gallant. I'm from Waldoboro, Maine, and I just want to say that abortion should be between a woman and her doctor, and that criminalizing it is not going to stop abortion. It's just going to make it less safe.

Testimony of Shlomit Auciello of Thomaston

My name is Shlomit Auciello. I live in Thomaston, Maine in Knox County. I'm 72 years old. When I was a young woman, I made a mistake. I did unprotected sex and I found myself pregnant. The person who had been saying he would marry me told me if I had that child he would not marry me. I made the wrong choice but it was my choice to make.

I don't think abortion's a good thing, but for some people it's necessary, and no law should be based on the morality of one subset of the American people. This is a nation of laws and freedom; don't mess with this, please.

Testimony of Nancy Davis of Owls Head

My name is Nancy Davis I live in Owls Head. I'm here to protest LD 975. I am

against this bill. I have to tell you just a quick little bit about my history: When I had two young children as a single mom, the youngest was two. I found myself pregnant by some man that I had no intention of being with, and so I had my first abortion. This is 50 years ago. Then later, 10 years later, I had another child with my now husband and within months after having this son I was pregnant again, and I knew that it was too much; I couldn't possibly do it. I had the choice, thank God, because when I was with my first daughter who is now 57, thank God she's here but she's only here because I could not get an abortion at that time. So I just have to say this choice is necessary for every young woman and the fact that we would try to take it away is just abominable. Thank you.

Testimony of Linda Campbell-Marshall of Hope

I'm Linda Campbell-Marshall Hope, Maine. When Adolf Hitler took command of Germany, the first thing he did was find a vulnerable minority to attack. It is interesting that the American oligarchs have taken the majority-minority, women, to begin their assault and then they have moved on to others: homosexuals and other persons, the poor who are vulnerable. It seems to me as though we should take a page from Germany's history book and know that the attack on women's rights is the first attack on the vulnerable in our country. This bill is a firm attack on women's rights here in the state of Maine. We must not pass it.

Testimony of Penny Dunning of Rockport My name is Penny Dunning; I'm from Rockport, Maine I'm against the bill LD 975. I'm 82 and in my 20s I had two abortions because I was not fit for caring for a child. I was just trying to get my work life underway. It freed me up in order to adopt my daughter as a single woman about 25 years later, and she is a beautiful person and I was able to afford to give her proper parenting and proper support and economic life and education. I'm glad to speak about this. Do what you can. Don't let it happen.

Testimony of Carol Heyer of Waldoboro

My name is Carol Heyer; I'm a native of Waldoboro, Maine, and I oppose this LD 635 because I feel that a woman's choice to do what she wants and is between her and her medical person and it should be not be left to the legislature to decide.

Testimony of James Cook of Camden

My name is James Cook. I live in Camden, Maine and I am testifying against HP 635 because I believe, even though I do not have a womb, that everybody who does have a womb has the right to decide what to do with it since it is part of their body. So I oppose the passage of HP 635, and I believe that the people who are trying to control other people's lives through force of government should be ashamed of themselves.

Testimony of Nancy Huus of Union

My name is Nancy Huss. I live in Union, Maine. I'm speaking about LD 975. I had an abortion in 1974; I was single with one child living on state aid. It was a choice that I did not want to make and it was a choice that I had to make. I would probably make that choice again and I want everybody to have that choice. This is very hard for me to say; it is a secret that I keep, but I believe that we all need a choice. Thank you.

Testimony of Mary Ellen Manock of Cushing

I am Mary Ellen Manock of Cushing, Maine. My entire opinion on abortion is that it is entirely up to the woman who is pregnant and who needs or wants an abortion. It's no one else's choice.

Testimony of Stephanie Mindykowski of Rockland

My name is Stephanie Mindykowski of Rockland, and I oppose HP 635 because it takes away the right of a woman's body away from the woman herself and gives it to the state. A woman should have it all self-determination to decide what is best for her body and what's best for her reproduction and all that, especially after what's going on in Texas where women are practically disenfranchised over laws like this. Like I said, Maine is a progressive state and I don't want Maine to go along the same way as a red state. That's why I oppose HP 635. Thank you.

Testimony of Pam Maus of Owls Head

My name is Pam Maus. I live in Owls Head, and I am in opposition to HP 635 because, although I am never comfortable with abortion at any place along the way, I am far less comfortable making a decision for someone else.

Testimony of Mary Jo Bateman of Rockport

My name is Mary Joe Bateman, and I'm from Rockport Maine. I wanted to express my objection to LD 975. When it comes to abortion or pregnancy laws, politicians in Washington DC and state capitals can't know what every woman and her family is going through. They're going to hurt real people going through complicated issues with their one-size-fits-all restrictions. Abortion later in pregnancy is extremely rare and almost always because something in the pregnancy has gone wrong. I know that it's not a politician's role to play doctor. We can't possibly say what would be safe or medically appropriate for every pregnant woman in an emergency. I cannot support a one-size-fits-all policy that would hurt women and families. Thank you.

Testimony of Diane Strange of Thomaston

I am Diane Strange; I live in Thomaston and I'm 87 years old. No one has a right to tell another person what they can or can't do with their body This is not legal. It is nothing to do with government; it's to do with our lives.

Testimony of Erin Darnell of Rockland

My name is Aaron Darnell. I'm from Rockland Maine. I am against LD 975. Abortion access is women's health care and should be available to everyone who needs that kind of care. It is not anybody's right to tell women or other people what they can and cannot do with their body. It's just disgusting what we're seeing happening in our country right now.

Testimony of Susan MacNeil-Densmore of Camden

I am Susan MacNeil-Densmore, living in Camden Maine, and I am against LD 975 for personal reasons. I began being a mother at over the age of 40, which showed that conceiving a pregnancy was going to be questionable. At one point I had a diagnosis of a mosaicism of Trisomy 20 which no one knew much about and which would have meant that I would have had a deformed, disabled child. There were bridges in the brain and organs in the wrong place, and so I, we, just my husband and I, we were both on the same page and decided to abort. We already had a small child and I have worked in Special Ed all my life, so I knew that at over the age of 40 we did not want to be trying to raise a disabled child. Whether the child would have lived or not we don't know. Some doctors said there was an 80% chance, but we're not gamblers and we did not want to take the risk. So I had an abortion, and I believe any woman, couple, family should have the choice to have an abortion if it is needed and recommended or if they're not able to parent a child who may not survive.

Testimony of Maureen Haining of Rockport

My name is Maureen Haining. I am from Rockport, Maine and I am here to speak against LD 975. Abortion should be safe, legal, and rare: these are the words I have heard through the years and should be the mantra by which we continue to provide the best maternal health care to all women in this country. Criminalizing abortion care is an assault on the rights and freedom of women to decide how best to live their lives with full control of their own destiny. It also deprives women of life-saving medical procedures, should complications with their pregnancy arise. This bill is not about protecting life but about controlling women's lives. Maine voters have consistently supported reproductive rights and should continue to do so. This bill should be voted down.

Testimony of Suzanne Noel Jost-Coq

My name is Suzanne Noel Jost-Coq, and I live in Friendship, Maine. I wanted to testify against LD 975. I myself personally have unfortunately lost a pregnancy: a miscarriage. I'm alarmed by the requirements in this bill. I think they're very, very strict and a lot of people are going to end up possibly arrested or imprisoned because they don't have all their documents and everything. I also know for a fact that a lot of people end up needing an abortion later in the pregnancy because of their own health crisis or fetal nonviability, and I think that this bill is not the right way to go. Thank

you.

Testimony of Karin Lockwood of Rockport

I'm Karin Lockwood, also known as Kiki, and I live in Rockport Maine and I am very opposed to LD 975. I believe in "My body, my choice." People need to keep their hands off other people's bodies and reproductive choices. I have family friends and relatives who have had abortions in the past, and it's their decision to do that, and they need to continue to be able to have that choice. Thank you.

Testimony of Kara Potter of Washington

I'm Kara Potter. I live in Washington, Maine, Zip Code 04574, and I'm talking to you today because I want you to know that I really support people's right to choose and to have an abortion if that's the right choice for them. I really feel like abortion is healthcare. We've seen in Texas and other states where women are dying because abortion has been restricted, and I don't want to see that happen in Maine. You know, we have a lot of rights here in Maine. We support gun laws. We support abortion rights. We support trans and everyone's rights here. I think that needs to stay because we all feel equal here, and I love that about Maine. I think that's important to keep and I hope you'll vote against this legislation and keep abortion legal in Maine. Thank you so much.

Testimony of Denise Munger of Rockport

I'm Denise Munger from Rockport, Maine, and abortion rights are reproductive health care rights for women. The state cannot and must not outlaw or criminalize abortion. In this state, we have always protected the rights of our people and we must protect the rights of women, which includes abortion healthcare. Thank you.

Testimony of Sydney Hall of Camden

My name is Sydney Hall. I'm from Camden Maine, and while I know that abortion is a very difficult decision, I think to criminalize it - to ban it - is to take it out of the hands of the people who need to make that decision. That's what I have to say.

Testimony of George Baggett of Union

I'm George Baggett of Union, Maine. I believe that abortion is the right of everybody. I've got one daughter (I'd have two or three if it wasn't for abortion), and that's a good thing. So I'm against that bill.

Testimony of Henry Laszlo of Lincolnville

I'm Henry Laszlo from Lincolnville, Maine, and I believe women should have the right to choose. That's all I've got to say.

Testimony of Mary Padilla of Rockland

I am Mary Padilla of Rockland, and to criminalize women to have abortions would be inconceivable for the woman and for the families. It is necessary health care.

Testimony of Eliza Bailey of Appleton

My name is Eliza Bailey. I live in Appleton, Maine and I would like to speak vehemently against LD 975. The reason is when I was in my early 30s I needed an abortion for a Down Syndrome child that I was carrying, and my husband and I were not in the position according to our feelings at the time to raise a child with such a grave disability. There was a lot less known about Down Syndrome then there is now, kind of a stigma against it. Days were different, but I had the right to choose and I was thankful for it, and I believe others should have the same opportunity. Thank you.

Testimony of Mary Fairfield of Camden

I am Mary Fairfield of Camden. I am appalled that we have to continue to fight for our reproductive rights as women in this country. In this state, I have a daughter. I'm deeply concerned for her, for all young women. And I am so hopeful that this will not become legislation. Thank you.

Testimony of Patti Luchetti of Rockland

I'm Patti Luchetti of Rockland, Maine. My remarks are very short. I simply want to remind everyone that no one wants to have an abortion. There are often economic factors that make it impossible to have the wisdom to see when it is the right time to

take on that huge responsibility. It is in fact the case that our social service network is severely limited and broken. No one wants to have an abortion. Thank you.

Testimony of Kathryn DerMarderosian

I'm Kathryn DerMarderosian of Owls Head, and I have a very short message. A woman's body is her own. It's not against the law to take care of oneself as one wishes.