

My name is Charlotte Strong-Ames. I am a lifetime resident and lover of the state of Maine. I am a registered nurse at Pen Bay Hospital in Rockport, Maine. When Roe vs Wade was overturned, I felt betrayed by my country, terrified, and confused. How could we be moving backward as a country? Here is a quick recap of the rights women have been fighting for for the past century:

- 1920: White women can finally vote in all 50 states
- 1923: Women can wear pants in public (even though it wasn't widely accepted until the 60s/70s)
- 1937: Women can have a passport in their name
- 1950s-1970s: Women can use women-only restrooms anywhere (many buildings didn't have them)
- 1960s: Women can serve on a jury
- 1965: Black women can vote in all 50 states
- 1965/1972: Women can legally access birth control without the consent of their husbands (and if they are single)
- 1969-1983: Women can attend Ivy League schools
- 1969 (first state)-2010 (last state - in 2010!!!): Women can file for no-fault divorce
- 1973: Women can get legal abortions (Which got overturned in 2022)
- 1977: An act against workplace harassment of women is passed
- 1978: Women can keep their jobs while pregnant (It's outrageous to me that we used to fire women for being pregnant, yet now we want to force women to carry unwanted pregnancies).
- 1993: Women can legally refuse sex with their husbands (marital rape was criminalized). Again.....marital rape was criminalized in 1993.
- 2018: Breastfeeding in public is legal in all 50 states

In 1973, the Supreme Court, in a 7-2 decision, agreed and recognized that a woman's decision to terminate a pregnancy was a *fundamental right*. Why is that being revoked in 2025? Why must we restart the fight that our grandparents and great-grandparents fought for only 55 years ago?

According to a study done by Kheyfets et al., "maternal death rates in abortion-restricted states were 62% higher than in states with greater abortion access" (2023). I'll repeat that one more time: there was a 62% higher rate of maternal deaths in abortion-restricted states in 2023. NBC News reported that in Texas, "Among Hispanic women, the rate of women dying while pregnant, during childbirth or soon after increased from 14.5 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 to 18.9 in 2022. Rates among white women nearly doubled — from 20 per 100,000 to 39.1. And Black women, who historically have higher chances of dying while pregnant, during childbirth or soon after, saw their rates go from 31.6 to 43.6 per 100,000 live births" (Edwards et al., 2024). The more women who are forced to carry pregnancies, the more pregnancy complications will arise, inevitably resulting in increased maternal deaths in this state. In 2025, with the medical and technological advances we now have, maternal deaths from birth should be decreasing, NOT increasing. How do we determine whose "life" is more important? How can we, as mere human beings, decide whether a woman's right to HER life is less important than the fetus she is carrying? I'll also ask a question - how many representatives in the Maine legislature have been to medical school? How many of you have taken the time to study the statistics of abortion and done your unbiased research to genuinely determine for yourself when an abortion is necessary and when it is not? Do any of you have daughters, sisters, mothers, or wives who have needed to get an abortion for whatever

reason? Have you ever asked them? To the male legislatures in the room: Have you ever benefited from abortion? I bet you have no idea the number of times a woman took a plan B pill to prevent an unwanted pregnancy that neither you nor she wanted.

Have you ever asked the women you love if they've ever been sexually abused or assaulted? I promise *at least* one woman in the room with you today has experienced sexual harassment or assault. I'm willing to bet some of your children at school get sexually harassed daily by other male classmates. Another disturbing part of this bill is the reduction of criminal prosecution towards people who assault a pregnant person. If we criminalize abortion in the state of Maine and follow through with the implications surrounding this bill, we are essentially telling abusers it's okay to harass our sisters, mothers, wives, daughters, and nieces. It's okay to physically harm them if they're pregnant. But it's not okay for a woman of sound mind and body, a woman who has complete autonomy, to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. In fact, it sends the message that the people of the state of Maine are so against abortion (and women) that we will prosecute a woman for seeking out an abortion, but anyone can assault a pregnant person. We won't be as hard on you as we are on the woman who got an abortion. How does that make any sense? How is that protecting people in this state?

According to the Maine Health and Human Services website, there were 2,401 children in state custody in Maine in 2023, the highest number since 2004. In 2022 in Maine, the maltreatment rate of children was 3,792 (Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). In the United States, children in foster care experience two-fold higher rates of lifelong trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder rates of 14-30%, compared to 7% for the general child population. There is also evidence suggesting that children in foster care experience a 27% higher rate of sexual abuse (Kirkner et al., 2024). If a soon-to-be mother cannot afford a child, does not want a child, or is not in a healthy mental capacity to have a child, why should we force her to give birth? Why would we want to risk that child entering foster care only for their likelihood of lifetime trauma to increase two-fold? According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys are victims of childhood sexual abuse/rape under 14 years old. "A child who is the victim of prolonged sexual abuse usually develops low self-esteem, a feeling of worthlessness, and an abnormal or distorted view of sex. The child may become withdrawn and mistrustful of adults and can become suicidal. Children who do not live with both parents, as well as children living in homes marked by parental discord, divorce, or domestic violence, have a higher risk of being sexually abused... Compared to those with no history of sexual abuse, young males who were sexually abused were five times more likely to cause teen pregnancy, three times more likely to have multiple sexual partners, and two times more likely to have unprotected sex" (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2010). Even if an unwanted child does not enter the foster system, they are still at risk of abuse in their own homes.

It's also essential to address the proposed requirement of reporting miscarriages before the end of the month the miscarriage took place. Not only are miscarriages incredibly traumatic for a mother, but they are also painful and physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually life-altering. By forcing women to report miscarriages, we as a state are suggesting that we scrutinize a woman's body for unwillingly terminating a pregnancy. A miscarriage can last anywhere between 2-6 weeks. So not only the mother is still grieving the loss of her future baby, but she could also still be bleeding. These mothers are going through enough emotional turmoil - why should we force them to report their fetal loss when there is

genuinely no reason to? What is the benefit? To prevent spontaneous abortions? That is not how the human body works.

As a registered nurse and future nurse practitioner, I cannot stress enough the importance of keeping abortion access an unrestricted option in this state. Maine is known for being kind, compassionate, and welcoming to many people. I often hear from my out-of-state patients that Mainers are friendlier than any state they've been before. Let's maintain this mentality for the children, men, and women of this state by protecting a woman's right to choose. Please do not make our women and children have to fight for our fundamental human rights all over again. I would like to see Maine remain a safe place for all our residents, regardless of individual beliefs. If you don't believe in abortions, don't get one. But do *not* impose your beliefs on others and subject them and their future children to lifelong turmoil, trauma, struggle, and death.

Thank you.

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