

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm very concerned about the threat to abortion access here in Maine. This is about women's and children's health. There are many different situations that arise in a person's reproductive life and passing one law to cover various situations is not a good solution, especially when it can threaten the life of a mother.

I've had two abortions early in my 20s. I know that it was the right thing to do because I was not ready to be a parent. I started my family when I was 38 and I'm struggling with it even having had the time to do the research and set up support systems. My mental health is an hourly struggle, pregnancy was very difficult, and keeping life consistent for children is not easy in this climate. I did not take precautions when I was young because I did not have the self esteem to deal with the situations presented to me. My father died when I was 14 and my mother was not an emotionally supportive caregiver. There are many other reasons that contributed, but I'll keep it short.

If keeping families strong to build a better country is the goal, then abortion access is vital. As an adult managing family life with little to no support, I strive to provide this for others and have had to step up when others didn't. Abandonment trauma and attachment disorders are lifelong struggles. I have personally taken in 4 teenagers struggling with these issues. I still watch them struggle as adults. Three of them are raising children and it is heart wrenching watching them struggle to support their children who are now suffering from generational trauma. One of these teens was dropped at my doorstep by DHHS even though she was not related to anyone living here. I was told they would be back to take her in a couple days. She was here for months, then shipped back to her home state where she had a family lined up. That situation fell through the day she arrived, and she was sent to a group home. The system cannot support these children. Do we really want to continue to allow unwanted children to come into the world and be treated this way? I had 4 at my door in rural Maine. How many more are out there with nothing?

After 2 abortions, then 8 years of unexplained infertility, I finally gave birth to my first child. She lived for two days due to her cord breaking at birth and loss of blood. I spent years sitting in grieving support groups with other moms and dads. I've heard their unique stories. They're all intensely different with heart-breaking choices. Many of the moms are dealing with medical problems that force them to make decisions about their own life and their baby's life. They're not making these decisions lightly. These babies are very much wanted. In some situations, these problems didn't arise until late in the pregnancy and there was no way to know. It is up to the family and the doctor to weigh options. Options should be available for the mental and physical health of the person, families, communities and our nation. Throwing legality into the mix causes more trauma and rips families apart.

Please leave medical options for women alone. There are other ways to support people in making better decisions about abortion. Focus attention and support on systems that are useful, helpful, self-esteem building, mentally supportive, etc. Show our young people that they are worth it... that they deserve the best... that they don't have to settle. Let's stop traumatizing the next generation with laws that hurt us.

Sincerely,

Marisa Tobey