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March 27, 2025

Re: LD 975, An Act to Repeal Laws Allowing Abortion and to Criminalize Abortion

To: Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee

The Maine Chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (MC-FFRF) writes in opposition to LD 975, An Act to Repeal Laws Allowing Abortion and to Criminalize Abortion.

One of the most dangerous and harmful proposals of this session is the idea of criminalizing abortion. Making abortion a criminal act would not only deny individuals their basic reproductive rights but also put their health and safety at risk, disproportionately impact marginalized communities, and undermine the principles of personal autonomy and equality in our society. Criminalizing abortion would be a regressive step, one that threatens human rights and disregards the well-being of individuals who may need access to this essential healthcare service.

The right to access abortion is inextricably linked to the broader concept of reproductive rights, which are recognized as human rights under international law. According to the United Nations, access to safe and legal abortion is a critical component of a person's right to health, bodily autonomy, and equality. Criminalizing abortion effectively denies individuals the right to make decisions about their own bodies.

The ability to control one's reproductive health is essential to personal autonomy and gender equality. Without access to abortion, individuals are stripped of the ability to make decisions about when or whether to become a parent - which directly impacts their education, career, financial stability, and overall life trajectory. Criminalizing abortion is an attack on this autonomy, as it forces individuals to comply with laws that may not align with their circumstances or beliefs.

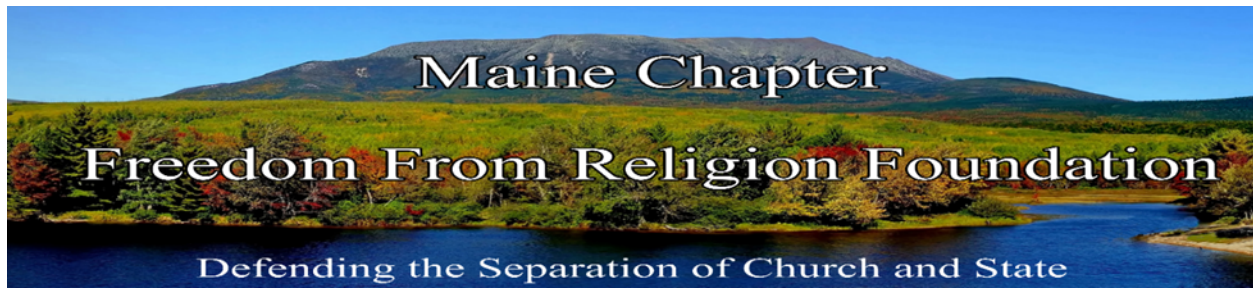
When abortion is criminalized, it does not eliminate the need for the procedure—it only makes it more dangerous. Studies show that people continue to seek out abortions, but often under unsafe, unregulated, and risky conditions, leading to higher rates of injury, infection, long-term health complications, and even death.

Criminalizing abortion forces people into these risky situations, and the consequences are devastating. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), unsafe abortions are one of the leading causes of maternal mortality globally. These are preventable deaths, and we must not go back to a time when people risked their lives to make a choice about their own bodies.

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People with limited financial resources often face the most significant obstacles in accessing abortion services. When abortion is criminalized, individuals with the financial means to seek care may still be able to access the procedure through illegal or out-of-state means, but those without resources are left with few options and are more likely to resort to unsafe methods. Criminalizing abortion further marginalizes those who are already vulnerable.

Criminalizing abortion would force healthcare providers to choose between providing essential, compassionate care and potentially facing criminal charges. Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals who perform abortions may be subject to arrest, fines, and even imprisonment, depending on the laws in place. This creates a chilling effect within the medical community, as providers may hesitate or refuse to offer abortion services out of fear of legal consequences.

The criminalization of abortion would also compromise the patient-provider relationship, as patients may be less likely to seek care or disclose critical information to their providers out of fear of legal repercussions. This could lead to delays in care and an overall decline in the quality of healthcare for those seeking abortions.

Moreover, healthcare providers who perform abortions play a vital role in ensuring that individuals receive the proper medical care, support, and counseling during what can be a difficult and emotional process. Criminalizing abortion undermines the trust between patients and healthcare providers and places unnecessary barriers between people and the care they need.

Criminalizing abortion denies individuals the ability to make decisions about their reproductive futures, which impacts their ability to participate fully in society. Criminalizing abortion is a step backward in the fight for gender equality. It sends a message that women's bodies are not their own and that the state has the right to control personal and private decisions. Forcing people to carry unwanted pregnancies to term diminishes their ability to pursue education, career goals, and other aspirations, and it denies them the opportunity to make choices about their lives and futures.

The criminalization of abortion does not reduce the need for the procedure; it only makes it more dangerous and harmful. We must not return to a time when individuals were forced to risk their lives for the right to make decisions about their own bodies. Abortion is a right that should be protected and accessible to everyone.

MC-FFRF urges the committee to vote "Ought Not To Pass".

Thank you for your time and consideration.

-Ray Vensel, President

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