



Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

**LD 780: A RESOLUTION Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine
to Protect Personal Reproductive Autonomy**

January 22, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches. The Council has seven mainline Protestant member-denominations and two associate member congregations who represent more than 400 local churches in Maine with over 50,000 parishioners in their care. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in SUPPORT of LD 780.**

As you know, the Maine Council of Churches has consistently advocated for protecting the right of people in Maine to access reproductive health care, and we do so, not despite our faith, but *because* of it. In fact, a majority of Christians in the U.S. believe reproductive health care should be safe, accessible, and legal. But neither churches nor the government should have the authority to interfere with the fundamental human right of reproductive autonomy or to restrict citizens' freedom and liberty to make their own personal decisions about reproductive health care. And because reproductive rights are fundamental human rights, they should not be up for debate after every election cycle. An amendment to Maine's constitution would ensure that protection of these rights is no longer left to the uncertainty of election outcomes. It would ensure these rights were protected now and in the future.

A wide diversity of experiences, opinions, and beliefs related to reproductive health care exist among people of faith in all religious traditions—including the 50,000+ Mainers who are church members in our Council's member-denominations. But no particular religion's doctrines about reproductive autonomy belong enshrined in our state or federal law. The U.S. Constitution prohibits the establishment of a state religion, and our state constitution should not favor one faith tradition's interpretation over any other tradition's. This amendment would ensure that *everyone's* right to live out their religious beliefs about reproductive health care choices would be protected. (Of course, it would also protect the rights of those citizens who may not have religious beliefs related to reproductive health care, but who nonetheless deserve to have their freedom and liberty protected by our state's constitution.)

For these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 780.

Jane Field
Maine Council of Churches
LD 780

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As you know, the Maine Council of Churches has consistently advocated for protecting the right of people in Maine to access reproductive health care, and we do so, not despite our faith, but because of it. In fact, a majority of Christians in the U.S. believe reproductive health care should be safe, accessible, and legal. But neither churches nor the government should have the authority to interfere with the fundamental human right of reproductive autonomy or to restrict citizens' freedom and liberty to make their own personal decisions about reproductive health care. And because reproductive rights are fundamental human rights, they should not be up for debate after every election cycle. An amendment to Maine's constitution would ensure that protection of these rights is no longer left to the uncertainty of election outcomes. It would ensure these rights were protected now and in the future.

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