



Testimony before the Committee on Judiciary

**LD 1229 An Act To Require Certain Medical Providers To Administer Ultrasounds
and Provide Information to Certain Pregnant Patients**

May 18, 2021

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, a resident of Portland (and your constituent, Senator Sanborn), and an ordained Presbyterian (PCUSA) minister. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches which has seven member-denominations (Episcopal, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian (PCUSA), Quaker, Unitarian Universalist, United Methodist and United Church of Christ) who represent 437 local congregations in Maine with 55,000 members statewide.

The Maine Council of Churches **opposes** LD 1229.

I am likely not the only Christian you will hear from today. I respect the right of those Christians who support this bill to be here representing *their* interpretation of Christianity. But *their* interpretation is not mine, nor is it that of the Maine Council of Churches. My own denomination has advocated for reproductive choice and justice since 1970, *before* Roe v. Wade, understanding the termination of a pregnancy to be a matter of a careful ethical decision by the patient that should not be restricted by law. We affirm the ability of women to make good moral choices and believe the decision to end a pregnancy can be such a choice.

Abortion is a complex health care and moral issue requiring nuanced medical, ethical and spiritual discernment in each unique situation. A wide diversity of experiences, opinions, and beliefs related to abortion exist among people of faith in all religious traditions—including the 55,000 church members in our denominations. But neither we, as “the Church,” nor you, as the government, have the wisdom or authority to decide what is best for a woman in an individual situation when she is considering abortion.

The unprecedented number of anti-abortion bills coming before the 130th legislature are part of a backlash to the success of reproductive rights legislation here in Maine in 2019 and are aimed at decreasing access to abortion while increasing the stigma of judgment and shame that some wish to place on women making legal and ethical decisions for their own reproductive health care.

Affordable and accessible healthcare is one of the central tenets of our Council’s biblically grounded “Moral Agenda.” We believe health care is a basic human right and we consistently advocate for ensuring Mainers’ access to affordable health care, regardless of income. That includes comprehensive, high-quality and affordable sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion services. People throughout Maine should have access to safe, quality care that empowers them to build the lives and families they envision and to decide when and whether to parent.

LD 1229 would seek to force medical professionals to perform a procedure that has no basis in medical science. Facts are important, especially when discussing the health of Maine’s women. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has deemed that an ultrasound prior to an abortion is medically unnecessary. This procedure serves only to create an undue burden for women attempting to access safe legal abortion care and is yet another example of attempts to shame women who seek an abortion by adding testing that has nothing to do with the procedure to terminate a pregnancy. This bill is a thinly veiled attempt to infringe on a woman’s right to choose a legal medical procedure, as well as to stigmatize and judge those who choose it.

Yet, politicians are pushing legislation to require physicians to perform the procedure and to require patients to undergo medically unnecessary treatment. Such unfounded legislative mandates represent dangerous political interference and compromise patient care. Neither politicians (nor church leaders) should be in the business of enforcing this kind of mandate.

For these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote “Ought Not To Pass” on LD 1229.

***Episcopal Diocese of Maine, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA),
Religious Society of Friends, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church***