



Testimony before the Committee on Judiciary

**LD 748 An Act To Remove Coverage under the MaineCare Program
for Abortions Not Covered by Medicaid**

**LD 915 An Act To Conform State Funding to the Federal Hyde Amendment
Limiting Funding for Some Abortion Services**

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 748 and LD 915.

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. These bills would disproportionately affect low-income Mainers and Mainers of color.

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 – *regardless of what their income is* – 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.

For all these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote “Ought Not To Pass” on LD 748 and LD 915.

*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*