Testimony before the Committee on Judiciary

LD 253 **An Act to Prevent the MaineCare Program from Covering Abortion Services**
LD 682 **An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Abortion**
LD 886 **An Act to Regulate Medication Abortions**
LD 887 **An Act to Make Manufacturers Responsible for Proper Disposal of Abortion Drugs and Require a Health Care Provider to Be Physically Present During a Chemical Abortion**
LD 975 **An Act to Repeal Laws Allowing Abortion and to Criminalize Abortion**
LD 1007 **An Act to Update the State's Informed Consent Laws Regarding Drug-Induced Abortion**
LD 1154 **An Act to Require That Informed Consent for Abortion Include Information on Perinatal Hospice**

March 28, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rev. Jane Field, I am an ordained Presbyterian (PCUSA) minister, and the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, a coalition of seven mainline Protestant denominations (Episcopal, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian (PCUSA), Quaker, Unitarian Universalist, United Methodist and United Church of Christ) who have more than 400 local congregations in Maine with over 50,000 parishioners in their care.

The Maine Council of Churches **opposes the seven bills before you** today that seek to give the state the ability to interfere with people's rights to make deeply personal decisions about their health care that are informed by guidance from their trusted medical providers. **The bills seek to impose some politicians' *religious* beliefs on citizens via the law. They seek to take away Mainers' rights and access to essential health care.**

I am likely not the only Christian you will hear from. And while I respect the right of those Christians who oppose this bill to adhere to *their* interpretation of Christianity, let me be perfectly clear: *their* interpretation is not mine, nor is it that of the Maine Council of Churches. And their views about abortion are not the only conclusions thoughtful people of faith can reach. My own denomination, for example, has advocated for reproductive 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, in consultation with medical professionals, that should not be restricted by law.

A majority of Christians here in Maine and across the United States believe abortion should be safe and legal, and in recent years, we at the Council of Churches have consistently advocated in the Maine state legislature for protecting the right of people in Maine to access reproductive health care that includes abortion. **We affirm the ability of pregnant people to make good moral decisions and believe the decision to end a pregnancy can be a moral decision.**

Abortion is a complex health care and moral issue requiring sensitive medical, ethical and spiritual discernment in each unique situation. We take seriously the complexities of specific lives and circumstances and honor the dignity and agency of pregnant people. We appreciate the need for nuance and humility when considering the moral agency of others, and believe that what we, as people of faith, have to offer our world is not a set of simplistic answers to life's difficult questions—rather, we are called to offer compassion, mercy, and advocacy for access to health care, including reproductive health care, as a basic human right.

Six of the Protestant denominations who are members of the Maine Council of Churches have explicit pro-reproductive justice stances in their policies. Judaism is clear in its interpretation of Hebrew scripture: a fetus does not have the status of a human life or personhood (Exodus 21: 22-25). The bible (neither Hebrew nor Christian scripture) hardly speaks anything straightforward into the intensely personal realm of when human life begins or what decisions should be made in complicated, real-world situations involving pregnancy or abortion.

But **no religion's doctrines about abortion belong in state or federal law**. The U.S. Constitution prohibits the establishment of a state religion, and **our laws should not favor one faith tradition's interpretation over any other tradition's, including when it comes to abortion**. The teachings about abortion of faith traditions such as evangelical or Roman Catholic Christianity should not become law, for example. That would constitute favoring one religion over others and that is **unconstitutional**. **Those who argue that personhood begins at the moment of conception are making a *religious* argument, not a legal argument, not a medical argument. And religious beliefs should not be enshrined in our government's laws.**

That the bills before you are based on religion and not medical science is patently obvious. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists are clear in stating that none of the claims in these bills is supported by data or scientific evidence, and that the procedures described in these bills are not recommended in ACOG's clinical guidance on abortion.

If access to abortion care remains safe and legal, a matter of moral, medical, and spiritual discernment made by a pregnant person and their doctor, there would be no prohibition against an evangelical Christian or Roman Catholic person (or anyone else) deciding *not* to have an abortion. However, if their faith traditions' doctrines were the law of the land, the rest of us would be prohibited from exercising our own moral agency based on *our* religious traditions' belief that deciding *to* have an abortion can be a moral decision.

Ultimately, the government does not have the wisdom or medical expertise (and should not have the authority) to decide what is best for a pregnant person in a specific situation. Our state laws should protect the privacy of those who are pregnant so that they can make those decisions in consultation with their medical care provider and in the light of their own spiritual practice. With access to safe, quality health care that includes the option of abortion, pregnant people will be empowered to build the lives and families they envision, to decide when and whether to parent, and will be able to receive necessary medical procedures from their own physicians whom they know and trust.

The anti-abortion bills coming before the 132nd legislature are part of a backlash to the success of reproductive rights legislation here in Maine 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. **Those orchestrating this backlash are sorely out of step with the will of a significant majority of Maine voters, including a majority of Maine voters who are people of faith.**

We at the Maine Council of Churches believe in trusting in pregnant people and their medical teams to make private medical decisions without interference from politicians—and without interference from laws based on religious beliefs they do not hold.

For all these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to **vote "Ought NOT To Pass"** on LD 253, 682, 886, 887, 975, 1007, and 1154.