

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 1457, AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE CONSENT
LAWS FOR ABORTIONS PERFORMED ON MINORS AND INCAPACITATED PERSONS

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MAINE RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE

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Senator Hastings, Representative Nass, and members of the committee, my name is Linda Milliken, and I am the president of the Maine Right to Life Committee. I am here today in support of LD 1457, An Act to Strengthen the Consent Laws for Abortions Performed on Minors and Incapacitated Persons, sponsored by Representative Dale Crafts.

Minor teens aren't adults yet. It is in their best interest to have adult guidance in making important decisions, and for the vast majority of teens, their own parents are the adults who are in the best position to guide and support them. There are exceptions in the proposed law for families where this is not the case.

Understandably, a frightened and immature girl facing an unintended pregnancy may initially respond by not wanting to tell her parents. But we as adults know that the first response of a frightened, immature teen, is not necessarily in her best interest.

Maine law recognizes the importance of parents' involvement and guidance in all other areas, yet with abortion, our current law merely *suggests* that a minor *consider* involving her parents in the decision. Minors in Maine need their parents' permission to go on a school field trip, get their ears pierced, or even to leave school early. It is illegal to tattoo a minor in Maine under any circumstance, but the same minor can easily have an abortion without involving her parents in any way.

I have given you a copy of a news story that was in the Portland Press Herald last September about illegal tattooing of two underage girls. This crime is apparently taken quite seriously by both the police and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The story ends with these thoughts from a police officer, "Police take a dim view of tattooing children because they are too young to make decisions that are effectively permanent."

How much *more* permanent is an abortion? There are procedures to remove tattoos; there is no procedure to reverse an abortion.

I have attached a fact sheet from the Elliot Institute detailing 19 risks associated with teens who have abortions. I'll just mention a few:

- Greater risk of severe pain* and lacerations*

- Greater risk of serious or even life-threatening complications including post-abortion infections* which can lead to infertility, hysterectomy, or ectopic pregnancy*.

- Teens who abort are twice as likely as their peers to abuse alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine*.

- Teens are 6 times more likely to attempt suicide if they have had an abortion in the last six months than are teens who have not had an abortion*, and four times more likely than adults who abort * .

Is it really in the best interest of our teen girls to expose them to these risks without their parents' guidance and support? The same teens cannot go on a field trip or leave school early without their parents' permission!

In addition, there are circumstances and conditions that would contraindicate abortion - a minor may not know her full medical history or may not be forthcoming with information that could be very important for her physician to have.

A minor can currently get an abortion by simply receiving counseling from the abortion facility, and giving her own written consent. Maine law does not allow a minor to have a part of her body pierced with just counseling from the piercer and the minor's consent. Maine law does not allow a minor to have plastic surgery with just counseling from the plastic surgeon and the minor's consent. And can you imagine minors in Maine being allowed to be tattooed if they were simply counseled by the tattoo artist and consented to the procedure?

Some will say, what about the girl who needs an abortion immediately for medical reasons? Or the girl who may actually be endangering herself by revealing her pregnancy to abusive parents?

The proposed law clearly states that consent is *not* required when there is no time to obtain it due to a medical emergency. In addition, a girl who is a victim of sexual abuse, neglect, or physical abuse by either parent may substitute the consent of another relative. *Even this requirement can be waived by the court*, if it finds that this is in the minor's best interest.

I'd like to end by telling a personal story about a young woman I knew when she was about 18. I'll call her "Jeannie". Jeannie's sister was a single mom, the mother of a beautiful little girl. The whole family lavished love on Jeannie's niece, but seeing her filled Jeannie with pain. Why? Because when Jeannie had become pregnant as a young teen, she had a reaction that was not uncommon, "I can't tell my parents - they'd kill me!" Without telling anyone in her immediate family, Jeannie had an abortion. Later, her sister also found herself facing an unplanned pregnancy, but her sister told their parents, who responded with love and support. I still remember the pain on Jeannie's face and in her voice as she said, "Now whenever I see my mother with my sister's baby, it just tears me apart- she loves that baby so much! She would have been the same way with *my* baby." Jeannie's sister was in a tough situation and her parents really came through for her. Jeannie now has a deep regret that she will carry all of her life, because her parents were never given a chance to come through for *her*.

I ask you to please support LD1457 and give parents a chance to come through for their children. Thank you for your time.

* Citations for all abortion risks are at the end of the attached fact sheet "Teen Abortion Risks".

