



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

MEDIA RELEASE

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Diverse Group Gathers to Warn of Bill's Unintended Consequences

Current Maine law appropriately addresses violence against pregnant women

Augusta – Today, the day after the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety endorsed L.D. 1463, or “An Act Regarding Offenses against an Unborn Child,” individuals representing domestic violence victims, attorneys, and health practitioners will call upon Maine lawmakers to uphold current Maine law and reject L.D. 1463.

Citing that Maine already has a law enabling stiffer penalties for crimes against pregnant women, Kate Brogan, from the Family Planning Association of Maine, said, “this proposal is a bad idea for Maine women. In states where similar laws have been enacted, in literally hundreds of cases around the country, women have paid the price of these unintended consequences. By allowing women to be prosecuted for their actions during pregnancy, this bill opens the door for women to be prosecuted for any behavior, legal or illegal while pregnant.”

Pamela Boivin, a former prosecutor on domestic violence crimes who currently works with victims involved in the judicial system and the civil protection from abuse process, stated, “L.D. 1463 would open a Pandora's Box of legal repercussions regarding the separation of the rights of a pregnant woman from the rights of her fetus. And, will do little to reduce domestic violence or hold perpetrators accountable. Moreover, L.D. 1463 could place women in abusive relationships at further risk, as conceivably they may be prosecuted for failing to leave such relationships to protect their fetuses. Rather than policing women, we should be focusing our resources on appropriate education and intervention strategies to reduce domestic violence.”

Annie Lunt, a psychiatric nurse, added, “As you've heard, in other states these laws have lead to prosecution against pregnant women – for example, in the instance that a woman is unable to overcome a drug or alcohol problem when they become pregnant. As a society, we want to encourage women to seek help for substance abuse and mental health problems as early as possible in their pregnancies. But they will not do this if they are afraid of being prosecuted. That's my job as a practitioner, and it's our public health imperative.”

With the endorsement of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,
L.D. 1463 is now referred to the Senate for a vote.

*Maine Women's Lobby is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, membership organization working since 1978 to increase
opportunities for women and girls through advocacy and legislative action.*

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