

Good morning everyone,

Thank you to the committee members here today for allowing me to speak in support of the Reproductive Healthcare Bill 242.

My name is Megan Boudreau and I support the bill exactly as it has been initially proposed by the NDP. Reproductive health care services shouldn't be harassed. No person should have to endure harassment for a medical procedure. Anti-abortion protesters should be out of sight for those going in and out of abortions clinics. No matter their decision, patients and practitioners should feel safe and supported when going into a medical procedure. Currently, this is not the case. No one should have to face protesters while seeking medical treatment, but currently, that is the case. I have never advocated for anything before in my life. But I absolutely could not go on knowing that I didn't try to help protect my fellow sisters. What I saw was unethical and immoral to do to someone in such a vulnerable and delicate state.

So, I took it upon myself to try and protect the mental and physical well-being of those seeking abortion. This all started with me having to walk by protesters daily for about a month. I've lived in other provinces, and was already aware that they usually had an antiabortion protest day at the beginning of every October. The Campaign Life Coalition has a huge following, and they have had their anti-abortion protests every October and throughout the year, since 1987, starting in California. They have been allowed to harass and protest choice outside of abortion clinics for over 30 years, despite women being granted the right to choose for just as long.

I moved to Halifax in September to finish my degree, and was honestly taken back by how frequently this group was protesting outside fo the VG. I thought about how many people this must have upset, and how I wasn't sure if I would have the courage to walk through a line like theirs on my way in for an

abortion. They are making something that is already so difficult, even more traumatic. This angered me, for the sake of my fellow citizens. My heart hurt for everyone who has had the additional trauma of being judged, ridiculed, and harassed while trying to obtain the healthcare they have a right to. I knew something needed to change. I knew deep down that what these anti-abortion protesters were doing was harmful and wrong. I started with a video, which I posted online, showing my disgust for what they were doing to a vulnerable population. At that time, I wasn't aware of a solution, all I knew was something needed to change. Thankfully, someone on the internet mentioned Bubble Zones. I immediately started my research and was astonished to find out that many provinces already have this law in effect.

Why doesn't Nova Scotia? Something bad shouldn't have to happen to put protection in place. But something bad is already happening. I've had so many people reach out to me and thank me for asking for these protesters to move. SO many people have been negatively affected by the actions of these protestors. Anti-abortion groups claim to be peacefully protesting. But to quote a local social worker and abortion doula, Shannon Hardy, "Telling someone that they can't access health care is violence. You can't peacefully take somebody's rights away. Regardless of how you're doing it".

I became vocal, asking a lot of questions; the most important being "what can I do?". I started an online petition, to gain awareness on this subject. Over twelve hundred people were quick to support safe access for healthcare. You don't even have to be prochoice to believe that healthcare should be harassment free. It seems like a no brainer to ask protestors to move away from clinics, offices, homes, and hospitals, for everyone's safety and protection. Canadians have a right to access reproductive healthcare. Period.

Everyone here knows someone who has had an abortion. And there are so many reasons for why someone would undergo this medical procedure, none of which should be judged or decided by anyone else.

It was extremely uncomfortable for me to go around this city, asking strangers to talk about bubble zones to protect safe abortion access. But a small amount of discomfort for them and myself is a small price to pay for a better and safer future.

It is inspiring seeing MLAs stand up and share their personal experiences. They have given voice to this by sharing their stories. It is a testament to the fact that a law like this is necessary. Not just to protect people seeking safe access to healthcare, but to show that it is ok to talk about abortion. This isn't about the stigma surrounding abortion, this is about safe access to healthcare.

I am beyond grateful for this collaboration. It is a rare occasion for all parties to be in support. Reproductive health care services should be free from harassment and intimidation.

Thank you for your time.