



*Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Public Health  
In support of S.784 An Act negating archaic statutes targeting young women  
By Jessica Sullivan, LWVMA Specialist, Women's Issues  
July 11, 2017*

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports S.784 An Act negating archaic statutes targeting young women and urges its passage. This bill would repeal laws that are outdated and no longer enforced, so there is no chance they could be cited to take actions such as contesting an abortion clinic's advertising or challenging the ability of a college health service to provide birth control. Leaving these laws in place sends a signal to voters that the Commonwealth does not care enough about women's health, bodily autonomy, or evidence-based healthcare to repeal them. Additionally, repealing outdated and unenforceable laws improves public perception of and respect for the body of laws introduced and upheld by the Commonwealth.

This bill would:

- Section 1: Eliminate the requirement that an abortion performed after the 13<sup>th</sup> week be performed in a hospital with the facilities for general or obstetric surgery.
- Section 2: Repeal the law providing a 5-20 year prison term for anyone performing an abortion if the woman dies and a prison term of up to 7 years if she does not die, plus a \$2,000 fine.
- Section 3: Repeal the law prohibiting any advertising or information about obtaining an abortion or prevention of pregnancy.
- Section 4: Repeal the law outlawing and establishing a prison term for selling, lending, giving away or exhibiting any drug, medicine, instrument or article for prevention of conception or for causing an abortion; or for publishing any type of information on where such items can be purchased; or for manufacturing those items.
- Section 5: Remove the word "married" from the description of who can legally obtain contraceptives.

The Massachusetts League's strong belief in the freedom of reproductive choice dates back to the position adopted in 1972 supporting the "freedom of individuals to make informed reproductive decisions based on their own convictions and beliefs" that later was adopted by the League of Women Voters on a national level. To achieve this goal, the League supports an emphasis on preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies; access to family planning information, services and devices to people who want them; wide distribution of information

about contraception and sterilization; and public funding for birth control and abortion services for low-income women.

We urge the Joint Committee on Public Health to update our state's laws and to report this bill favorably and work for its passage this session.

Thank you for your consideration.