

Thank you, Chairman Gordon, and members of the House Judiciary Committee for considering the following statement.

My name is Raye Ellen Douville, a resident of Gilford. I am against HB 1625-FN.

From November 2011 to June 2013, I volunteered at Planned Parenthood's Manchester Health Centre.

During that time, I observed chronic safety issues related to the confluence of patients, protesters, and moving vehicles.

Patients have a right to access health care; protesters have a right to their views, and I respect our first amendment rights. Our goal is to find the fine line between what is fair for patients and protesters, emphasizing optimum safety.

Cars enter and leave the Planned Parenthood parking lot all day. Protesters often stand in the drive path, creating a safety hazard. On many occasions, children are with them. Further complicating the problem, parked cars crowd either side of the entrance, impeding the ability of a driver to see if there are any vehicles approaching.

More than once a day, I would ask protesters to stay out of the driveway path. Most honored my request, but a few resisted. I began directing cars out of the lot by positioning myself mid-road. Often, protesters are not moving. They stand in or next to the drive entrance.

The scene is emotionally charged. I had a duty to escort patients safely into the health centre. I shielded them with an umbrella. A few patients didn't care about the protests. Most remained silent. Sometimes a person accompanying the patient, or the patient reacted. I saw many close encounter shouting matches, incidents where I feared a physical confrontation might occur. I've also seen protesters stand and yell at a police officer giving them instructions, inches from the officer's face. I've seen a protester walk along the fence on Rite-Aid property, yelling at two people they knew were in the vehicle directly on the other side.

The 25-foot buffer zone reduces hazards by removing adults and children alike from the direct path of vehicles. It also reduces the likelihood of physical altercations.

What follows are images illustrating the hazards mentioned in my testimony:



People standing in driveway entrance, with children, during business hours.

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Child in drive without parent nearby.

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Children sitting by drive. One child is actually a bit into the drive. This is during business hours.

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Vehicle parked against drive.