

Christie Wessels
Paris, Maine
LD 394

I am concerned that chapter 117 will expand the power of school counselors and social workers to keep transgender and sex-related secrets from parents. This is an abuse of trust. Parents have the primary concern and ultimate responsibility for the well-being of their children. Separating children from their parents by encouraging them to hide things from them leaves children more vulnerable to predators. This is a dangerous move, and one that will ultimately do more harm than good. Yes, there are some abusive and neglectful parents, but unfortunately even social workers and counselors do not always have the best interests of children at heart. The United States laws have upheld the parents as the ones ultimately responsible for their children's well-being for this reason.

Supreme Court ruling *Parham v. J. R.*, 442 U.S. 584 (1979) states:

"The law's concept of the family rests on a presumption that parents possess what a child lacks in maturity, experience, and capacity for judgment required for making life's difficult decisions. More important, historically it has recognized that natural bonds of affection lead parents to act in the best interests of their children.

The statist notion that governmental power should supersede parental authority in all cases because some parents abuse and neglect children is repugnant to American tradition.

Simply because the decision of a parent is not agreeable to a child or because it involves risks does not automatically transfer the power to make that decision from the parents to some agency or officer of the state."

The idea that parents are not "safe" or that they are "abusive" if they do not uphold transgender ideology is wrong. Telling children they can choose their gender, affirming and ushering them along the path towards gender transition often leads to prescription of potentially dangerous puberty blocking drugs and cross-sex hormones that have not been used in this way long enough to allow for long-term clinical trials, and in many cases surgery to remove healthy body organs and tissue from minors resulting in irreversible damage to their formerly healthy bodies. Stories of "detransitioners" who underwent this transition both as adults and as minors and now regret the decision as they find themselves permanent medical patients with unending medical struggles are popping up more and more every month. Other countries are already putting a halt to this practice as the damage becomes more obvious. To label parents who see the danger of this for their beloved children and want to protect them as "unsafe" or "abusive" is so wrong.

I plead with you as legislators to use your authority to set up protections for minors from being led down this dangerous path, from being encouraged towards it by any professional in any Maine school, and to keep guardrails in place to maintain complete transparency with parents about what is happening with their children at school.