

Dear Senator, Representatives, and members of the committee,

My name is Jessica Hutchinson, a graduate student at the University of Maine. I am writing to you in support of LD 1735, An Act to Safeguard Gender-affirming Health Care in the state of Maine.

Experts in healthcare who are trained and licensed should be able to practice gender-affirming healthcare without the overwhelming concerns of laws and policies that restrict their work.

Given that there are at least 12 states that have passed restricting legislation on gender-affirming healthcare for people under the age of 18, Maine should be a safe place for people in the LGBTQ+ community, especially for those who are transgender. This is not only feasible and essential for people currently residing in Maine, but passing this bill could be a catalyst for other New England states to follow in our footsteps.

Young people are the ones who will live with the decisions we make today. They will be responsible for caring for the Earth, the generations after them, and for the people before them - us. Passing new bills such as LD 1735 shows young people that Maine cares and will be a place for families to seek safe, welcoming spaces.

While I am not a part of the LGBTQ+ community, many of my closest friends are. A few have nearly lost their lives to the hate and discrimination that is created by ignorance. I wish that was an exaggeration. I do not want to see my loved ones suffer in the place that I have grown so attached to because of the unique forests, people, and lifestyle. Gender-affirming care can save lives and improve the livelihood of not only those directly impacted, but by those that love them. It hurts to see those close to you in pain, especially when it can be helped by something as seemingly small as calling someone by their name. Taking a step to secure gender-affirming healthcare for youths in Maine would mean a great deal to many, creating a place where communities can thrive in this beautiful state.

Please support LR 848. Thank you very much for your time.