



Maine Equal Justice
People Policy Solutions

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MEJ Testimony in Support of LD 535, An Act to Increase Access to Necessary Medical Care for Certain Minors

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Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Kathy Kilrain del Rio, I use she/her pronouns, and I'm the Advocacy and Programs Director for Maine Equal Justice, a nonprofit legal aid provider working to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity for people in Maine. It's that last aspect of our work – equity – that brings us to testify in support of LD 535 today.

Maine has long had laws in place that allow for adolescents to make informed decisions about their health care without parental consent for certain medical services. Youth who are transgender should have the same right to autonomy over their own bodies when they and their medical providers believe it is the best treatment for their wellbeing. They should not be denied necessary health care because of the biases or lack of safety that they experience from their parents. We know that affirming the gender of transgender youth is the best way to reduce the myriad disparities experienced by this population, and LD 535 takes a measured approach to protecting the best interests of transgender adolescents.

Many studies have found that gender affirming care supports the long-term wellbeing of transgender youth. The many services that can be part of gender affirming care have demonstrated positive impacts for transgender youth, including lower rates of adverse mental health outcomes, stronger self-esteem, and improved quality of life.¹ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends "that youth who identify as TGD [transgender and gender diverse] have access to comprehensive, gender-affirming, and developmentally appropriate health care that is provided in a safe and inclusive clinical space."² This legislation makes it possible to follow this recommendation within a thoughtful structure for youth who are unable to attain consent from parents. That structure is not frivolous – it is a reasoned approach to ensure the safety and health of transgender youth.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this lifesaving legislation. By supporting this bill, you will be affirming the autonomy and identities of transgender youth throughout our state. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 535.

¹ <https://opa.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-03/gender-affirming-care-young-people-march-2022.pdf>

² <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/142/4/e20182162/37381/Ensuring-Comprehensive-Care-and-Support-for?autologincheck=redirected>