

I am submitting this testimony in favor of Maine LD 537. I come to you simply as a longtime resident of Portland, small-business owner, and the parent of two children who were born and raised in Maine. These two people have felt, throughout their lives here, the benefits of an extraordinary concurrence of attitudes: At every step they have been welcomed to be themselves in the fullest sense, free to choose their associations and behaviors, at the same time that they have enjoyed a default assumption that privacy is sacrosanct. This is at the heart of what makes Maine all too distinctive: *We lead* — the nation, the region, our own communities in whatever forms they take — while we stay out of other people's business. We care for each other without judging each other. We truly do *live* and *let live*.

This bill may have arisen in response to a particular, and particularly vicious, act that was based on a particular political perspective. But this bill is not, at its heart, about the politics of identity. This bill's heart, deriving from the essence of the soul of this state, reflects the most basic ethical principle I can imagine: Care for children, and do not do anything to bring them into danger. We take care of each other here. We don't look for ways to bring young people, for any reason, into the realm of cruelty and vitriol that far too often consumes their so-called elders. Nothing — absolutely *nothing* — justifies the exposure of a young person to danger, let alone a young person who because of the contentious politics around their self-expression is already under an amount of stress and pressure that most of us can't even imagine. One does not need to support trans people in any way in order to support the principle that children ought to be cared for, and other people's business ought to be stayed out of. The entirety of Maine would expect no less. I support LD 537, and I pray you all will as well.

Joe Appel  
Portland, Maine

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