

Hail Welsh
Searsport
LD260

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Judiciary, thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Hail Welsh. I am a resident of Searsport Maine, a graduate student of clinical counseling, and a future mental health practitioner in this state. I am writing to you to voice my support for LD260, an amendment to the constitution of Maine to establish that all Maine residents have equal rights under the law.

Transgender and gender nonconforming folks are among the most marginalized populations in the United States, and like many other marginalized groups, have been victimized by the current presidential administration. In 2023, there was a marked increase in attempted suicides for TGNC youth, directly linked to the passing of anti-transgender laws throughout the United States. For transgender and gender nonconforming youth, these laws act as an indicator of broader societal rejection of our identities, signaling that our identities and bodies are neither valid nor worthy of protection (Lee et al., 2024). Failing to pass LD260 into law, would signal that the state of Maine believes our bodies and identities are neither valid, nor worthy of protecting. 40% of LGBTQIA+ youth experience physical harassment at school, LGBTQIA+ youth are *more likely* than their heterosexual peers to attempt suicide, with this risk increasing if the child is unsupported at home. Higher risk of attempted suicide is present for transgender and gender nonconforming youth who are Black or Latinx (Sue et al., 2021). Continued harassment and bullying performed on the national level will only serve to increase the potential risk of suicide and lifelong psychological damage for transgender and gender nonconforming children and adults. Given that national anti-transgender attitudes and legislation present a highly increased potential for suicide among transgender and gender-nonconforming children, protective measures like LD260 become critical lifelines. Trans people regardless of age are being utilized as a public scapegoat for hatred. Despite best efforts to wipe proof of transgender and gender-nonconforming existence away from government websites, and even the historic Stonewall monument, we *still exist. We are still here.*

This country is in turmoil. In times of crisis it is necessary that we remain aware of the experiences of individuals who are the most at risk, the most vulnerable. We must take precautions to care for each other in the best ways we can. Closing this statement, I am reminded of the final lines from the poem First They Came by Martin Niemöller:

“Then they came for me / And there was no one left / To speak out for me.”

We must speak out and speak up for one another, before there is no one left.

I urge the committee to vote “Ought To Pass” on LD 260.

Hail Welsh
Resident of Searsport Maine

Resources

Lee, W. Y., Nicholas, H. J., Hobaica, S., DeChants, J. P., Price, M. N., & Nath, R. (2024).

State-level anti-transgender laws increase past-year suicide attempts among transgender and non-binary young people in the USA. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 8, 1–11.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-01979-5>

Sue, Derald Wing; Sue, David; Neville, Helen A.; Smith, Laura. *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* (p. 621). Wiley. Kindle Edition.

Hail W
Waldo County
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