

Erica Burkhart
Portland
LD 1277

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Erica Burkhart, and I am from Portland, Maine and I am a practicing family nurse practitioner at Open Circle Health in South Portland. I have been practicing medicine in Maine since 2016 - in primary care but with the particular privilege of working with transgender people of all ages.

I appreciate this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of LD 1277, An Act Regarding Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Activities.

This legislation is an important step toward preserving health data privacy or transgender people and protecting healthcare providers such as myself and colleagues who work directly with this population and understand the nuances and anxieties that are especially heightened at this time.

In my medical opinion, testosterone prescriptions do not need to be tracked on the PMP. The condition of gender dysphoria - which causes significant distress for the individuals affected - can be treated through gender transition care, and this includes, for some people, testosterone therapy. This is very safe when done under medical supervision and also, very effective, but is not similar to other "controlled" substances.

The PMP is designed to track those substances with a high risk of overdose or life threatening misuse - for example, opioids. In my practice, I do routinely utilize the PMP to ensure those patients I am prescribing medications that can lead to mis-use or dependence are not also being prescribed elsewhere to ensure that patients are safe. I do not see how testosterone falls under the same category as medications such as opioids, stimulants, sedatives, etc, when there is no addictive quality to it.

In a time where transgender people are being targeted more than ever, removing testosterone from the PMP would improve the health and well being of my transgender patients, as well as protect myself and other healthcare providers providing care to this very vulnerable population. The privacy of all people's medical information needs to be protected, in particular those who face persecution and are at risk for significant harm. The transgender people in my practice are trying to live their lives just as cis-gender folks are - working, taking care of their kids, going to school - and they deserve medical care, privacy, and compassion. There is no need to have another avenue to invade their privacy such as the PMP for a hormone that does not need extra monitoring.

I strongly urge the Committee to support LD 1277. This legislation would be an important step forward in protecting transgender people and their healthcare providers in Maine, like me. As I utilize my skills and knowledge to provide medical care that is evidence based, compassionate, and ethical, I ask for your support in this endeavor to be able to provide care without fear of litigation or retribution.

Please use your voices and your votes, to send the message to the transgender people living in our beautiful state of Maine that they are valued and protected here.

I thank you for your consideration,

Dr. Erica Burkhart, DNP-FNP-C