

Cory Budden
Bangor
LD 1432

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Cory Budden and I live and work in Bangor, Maine. I am writing in opposition to LD 1432, An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act.

I am a woman and some of my best and closest friends are trans or non-binary. I am truly sickened by the concerted efforts in our state and country to dehumanize and scapegoat the trans and LGBTQ+ community. Transgender people are not a threat to our communities, and in fact, they make our communities better. I see everyday my trans friends contribute to our economy in Maine, they own businesses, they volunteer, they are a part of this community. They do this in spite of the extreme levels of discrimination they face each and every day.

Removing "gender identity" as a protected class from the Maine Human Rights Act would significantly weaken explicit legal protections for women, transgender and nonbinary Mainers. While discrimination against queer and trans people can sometimes be challenged under "sex" or "sexual orientation," courts have not always interpreted these categories to fully encompass the unique experiences and forms of discrimination faced by transgender individuals. Explicit inclusion of "gender identity" ensures clarity and robust protection in areas such as employment, housing, education, health care, and public accommodations.

I am not in a minority of folks who support the protection of transgender people. According to the Pew Research Center, nationally, 64% of U.S. adults support laws that protect transgender individuals from discrimination, reflecting a broad consensus that such protections are needed.

Explicitly protecting "gender identity" in the Maine Human Rights Act is essential to safeguard the rights, safety, and well-being of transgender Mainers. Removing these protections would expose an already vulnerable population to increased discrimination, violence, and negative health and economic outcomes, as demonstrated by both national research and recent legislative changes in other states. Keeping "gender identity" as a protected class is not only supported by a majority of Americans, but is also a proven, necessary measure to ensure equal rights for all.