

Chelsea Bartlett
South Portland
LD 1704

As someone who is surrounded by members of the LGBTQ+ community in every area of life, I have to stress how important I've found it to accept gender differences across all spheres and age ranges. Kids and teenagers struggle so much with acceptance as it is. They need to be met with support and love or the consequences can be dire. I don't want to hear about any more trans kids taking their own lives because they seek acceptance at school and at home and they're met with intolerance.

My own family and friends, fortunately, are happy because they know that we love and accept them no matter what. All I want is for other kids, and the adults that they hopefully will grow up to be, to have that same knowledge, and the comfort and sense of support that come with it. No child deserves to feel unaccepted by the society and systems they're born into. We must show children that they are loved and accepted unequivocally.

This means trusting them to know themselves and accepting their gender identity. It means allowing them to use the restrooms, or play on the sports teams, that they identify with. It means using the name and pronouns they've chosen for themselves. It means showing care, which should come from all levels and every direction of any adults and systems they come across. Empathy, consideration, and understanding are all universally accepted positive traits. Trans kids need them from us now more than ever.