

Angela Gilbert  
Lewiston, ME  
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Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am writing to you as a Maine public school teacher of fifteen years. I appreciate your consideration of my testimony. I am writing to implore you to reject the harmful and dangerous bills that target the Trans community of Maine.

There is an attack against our Trans youth right now, and it is wearing the disguise of the protection of young girls. Having spent a decade and a half in the public school system, I can testify that the girls of Maine are not under attack from their Trans classmates. Simply existing as you are does not pose a threat to anyone. The small number of Trans women athletes in Maine, the very small number, are living their lives as women. Nobody is dressing in women's clothes and pretending to be a woman in order to access a locker room or win a sports competition. These claims come from people who do not know Maine youth. I do. And I am here to tell you that all these female athletes are trying to do is live their identities and live their passions.

Athletes have different genes that may help or hinder them in certain sports. Higher degrees of estrogen or testosterone can benefit athletes in certain sports. They are not villainized for it. Gender neutral locker rooms and bathrooms exist in schools. Nobody needs to be made to feel uncomfortable.

An outright ban of the existence of Trans people, which is exactly what these bills promote, protects nobody, and it hurts countless. It hurts me, as a cisgender, heteronormative woman, a teacher, because it massively prohibits my ability to perform my job, to keep my students safe, to help create a welcoming environment in my classroom, to run my school's Civil Rights Team and know that those protections serve every single of my students. How could we consider saying, "Everyone is protected, but not you." These bills tie my hands behind my back and force my Trans students to go into hiding. And my students deserve better than that. They deserve equal protection. They deserve to have it not ripped away from them by their government because some people believe that doing so protects girls.

The bill to remove "Gender Identity and Expression" from the protected Civil Rights groups is a violent attack with a clear message to the people of Maine: "Your government does not care who you are. It does not value you. Despite the fact that biology and science agree that gender is a spectrum, your Maine government will not allow you to exist." I cannot imagine a more dangerous message that Trans youth can hear. And it terrifies me for them.

Gender affirmation saves lives. This is statistically proven. Over half of Trans youth in Maine have considered suicide. Half. When a Trans person has someone in their life who affirms their identity, that number gets lower. If the government steps up

and says in a loud, clear voice, “We continue to affirm you. We believe you exist. You are not a threat,” imagine the lives that could be saved.

Imagine what could happen if you don’t send that message. Please do not do that to my students.

Thank you for your consideration.