

May 8, 2025

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Patti Forster, and I am a longtime educator at Camden Hills Regional High School with over three decades of classroom experience. I currently serve as president of the Maine Council for English Language Arts and am the 2021 Knox County Teacher of the Year and the 2020 Maine State English Teacher.

I am writing to express my unequivocal opposition to LD 1432, a bill that would strip gender identity from the protected categories in the Maine Human Rights Act.

This bill is not just a rollback of legal protections—it is a direct attack on the rights and dignity of transgender and nonbinary people across the state of Maine. The Maine Human Rights Act exists to ensure that all individuals—regardless of who they are—are treated fairly and without discrimination in employment, education, housing, credit, and public accommodations. Removing gender identity from the Act would expose an already vulnerable population to increased harassment, exclusion, and harm.

This is not an abstract issue. Transgender Mainers are our students, coworkers, neighbors, and friends. Many already face staggering rates of violence, unemployment, housing insecurity, and mental health challenges. The protections in the Maine Human Rights Act are a critical lifeline—ensuring that transgender people cannot be denied access to school facilities, evicted from housing, or fired from their jobs simply for being who they are.

As a teacher, I have seen firsthand how powerful it is for a student to be affirmed in their identity and how damaging it is when that identity is denied or erased. To remove legal recognition of gender identity sends a devastating message to transgender youth in our schools: that their lives and identities are not valued by the very state charged with protecting them.

This bill would also place Maine out of step with legal and professional best practices nationwide. Courts have increasingly recognized that discrimination on the basis of gender identity is a form of sex discrimination. Leading medical, educational, and legal organizations—including the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association—oppose efforts to erase protections for transgender people.

Let us be clear: the Maine Human Rights Act has made our state stronger, fairer, and safer. It reflects our shared values of justice and compassion. Stripping away gender identity from its protections undermines all of those values and invites harm where we should be fostering support.

I urge this committee to stand on the side of dignity, equality, and legal protection for all Mainers and to reject LD 1432 in its entirety.

Thank you for your time and commitment to justice.

Patti Forster