

Darcie Drew  
Portland, ME  
LD 1002

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

Thank you for letting us submit testimony to the committee today. My name is Darcie Drew, I'm a resident of Portland, and I am here on behalf of public school teachers and the MEA. I am submitting this statement in opposition to LD 1002.

I have taught high schoolers in Maine public schools for 6 years, in both York and Cumberland counties. The trans students I teach often find that school is the only place they can be themselves. Teachers are sometimes the only people who use the name and pronouns that are true to a student. In talking to students, I have heard how upsetting it is to be called by their deadname (the name they were given at birth that does not match their true identity). A student expressed to me that when their regular teacher was out, a substitute read their deadname off the attendance list, and it exposed their trans-ness to their classmates. This can lead to bullying, but it also gave this student feelings of dysphoria, which is visceral-- people may feel nauseous, restless, or even like they aren't in their own body. At home, many of these students fear abuse or estrangement if their parents or guardians knew who they really are. This bill would not only force teachers to deadname students who don't have parent support for their gender identity, but it would put so many trans students at risk because schools may be forced to out these students to families that would not be accepting.

A 2017 National Institutes of Health study compiled data about the disproportionate suicide risk for trans people: 18-45% of transgender youth and adults have attempted suicide in their lifetime, and many of those people reported multiple attempts. The Trevor Project in 2021 found that "transgender youth who lived with people who respected their names and pronouns had fewer suicide attempts compared to those who did not". While we cannot guarantee that families will be accepting of their child's gender, we can at least protect children at school. We can give children one place where they feel seen. The American Medical Association in 2018 found that trans youth who could use their accurate names and pronouns in school had "71% fewer symptoms of severe depression, a 34% drop in reported suicidal thoughts, and a 65% decrease in suicide attempts." If you genuinely care about Maine's youth, you will fail this bill.

If this bill passes, trans students will not be able to learn, because how can you learn if your teachers are disrespecting you and harming you by ignoring your identity every day? If this bill passes, trans students might not survive.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share my perspective with the committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD 1002, and every other bill that threatens Maine's trans community today.