

Jenny Martinez Nocito
Mount Vernon
LD 380

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Jenny Martinez Nocito, I'm a resident of Mount Vernon, Maine, and I'm writing in opposition of the bills before the committee today that impact our Maine Human Rights Act.

Nobody "decides" to identify as a different gender because it is easier. I'm grateful that I'm comfortable to be the woman I was born as, but I'm also incredibly aware as never before at what sheer privilege that is. No human takes a difficult and sometimes life-shattering path unless they feel like it is their only option to live as themselves. That courage deserves the respect of every human.

To repeal the basic protections of the Maine Human Rights Act regarding gender identity - which has stood for 20 years - would be a step so far backward that it's shocking to even have the issue before us today, and the ramifications of this are simply too wide to even fully predict. To not keep every woman safe because her gender assigned at birth might not align with her lived gender is shockingly cruel. To make gender-affirming care inaccessible or punishable is unthinkable. Statistics don't lie: people will die if these bills pass. People I love will have their lives changed unutterably; the same will happen to people you love as well, whether you know it in this moment or not.

That our Maine Human Rights Act exists at all is proof of its essentialness. No group of people who has been designated as needing that protection should be removed from it until we have reached true equality in our society, and the very fact that this conversation is happening, that these bills have been brought forward, is proof we are nowhere close to that point.

The gender a person identifies with is not what makes them a good person or not; that is defined by how they treat others with the power they are given and today, you are in a position of tremendous power. We are at a critical point, and the decisions that our lawmakers make now matter deeply. Big moments in history are being written as we watch. I urge you to choose kindness over cruelty, and continue moving Maine forward to make all our lives better.

Respectfully, I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD 380. Thank you.