

Miloh Hughes
Levant
LD 1704

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Levant, Maine
5/8/25

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Miloh Hughes, I am a resident of Levant, and I am here to advocate on behalf of all transgender, nonbinary, or otherwise gender-nonconforming children in the state of Maine. I am here in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

I have worked in child and adolescent mental health care for over 8 years in both inpatient and intensive outpatient settings. In that time I have had the privilege of working with at least 150 clients, many of them being LGBTQ+ youth. Those youth have shared with me countless experiences of homophobic and transphobic bullying that received little to no adult intervention - and that's with discrimination protections in place. If any of the bills proposed in this session pass, LGBTQ+ students would become more unsafe at school, which is already a hostile and unsafe environment for many Maine students; bullying and unfair rejection are two of the biggest stressors that lead my young clients to needing mental health care, and some of these bills would take away what few protections they do have from those stressors. I want folks to understand that these bills wouldn't only negatively effect trans and non-binary youth; ALL children will be the subject of increased scrutiny and criticism of their appearance with the only way to escape it being to conform to one specific idea of what a woman or a man is. To truly "prove" a child's birth sex would require a massive violation of privacy that could be triggered by the subjective opinion of any adult that deems fit, and it will not matter if the child is truly gender-non-conforming or not - one would only need "suspicion" in order to initiate a potentially traumatizing event for any student. Do you really think all of this increased risk and exposure of children is worth it in order to keep a few kids across the entire state from playing sports? It won't keep cisgender kids safer either, it will just make it that there will be no consequences when they become victim to misdirected discrimination.

Studies have shown time and time again that LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to develop severe mental health issues and consider suicide than their same age peers; data from 2024 states that 39% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide within the past year, and that number goes up to 46% for trans and non-binary youth. I share these facts in order to illustrate how much transphobic and homophobic attitudes, environments, and bullying are already contributing negatively to the well-being of children. Bills like those proposed today will further encourage bullying on the basis of perceived gender identity, which will guarantee that those statistics grow in the coming years.

If these bills pass, they would not ensure fairness or that girls and women are safer. They will put kids at higher risk for harm, not only by giving adults with questionable intent direct access to their bodies, but also by putting an undue emotional burden on an already extremely stressed out student population; Maine is already facing a youth mental health crisis, putting at-risk youth in the political spotlight will not help us fix that. I urge you to put aside any biases you may have for just a moment and remember that actual children are effected by these laws; those children will grow up to residents of this state, and they will remember how we treated them right now when they decide if they want to live their adult lives here. They will remember if their communities accepted them or allowed them to be discriminated against for being different, and they will act accordingly. Therefore, it would be in the best interest of all Maine citizens that the bills proposed in this session do not pass.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills.

