

Wanda Stahl
Wells
LD 868

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the committee.

I am Rev. Dr. Wanda Stahl, a lifelong Mainer currently residing in Wells, ordained United Methodist Clergy and retired professor from Boston University School of Theology. I am writing in opposition to LD 868.

I have worked with transgender colleagues, students, and parishioners for decades. I have been blessed and enriched by their stories and their presence in my life, and their contributions to the institutions I have served. Over these years, I have heard many heartbreaking stories of rejection, bullying, and other forms of violence and discrimination. I have also listened to students and colleagues who have been on the receiving end of such behaviors because they “looked” or “acted” like they were transgendered.

From my years serving as a professor in a theological school with a significant number of transgender persons, I know a supportive community is important for allowing people to thrive. A diverse community with equal access to opportunities for ALL students benefits everyone. In public schools, extracurricular activities are an important part of a student’s development and thriving. A person’s ability to participate in a particular sport should be based solely on their ability and not on their gender identity. Excluding people from participating solely on the basis of gender identity assumes that all transgender persons have similar abilities.

I’m also very concerned about the implications of this bill for the safety and well-being of ALL girls who participate in sports and access bathrooms or locker rooms. Any girl who is of strong build or taller than average will be subject to extra scrutiny and potential bullying. What disrespectful scrutiny will all girls be subject to in order to prove they are female? This bill has the potential for making participation in sports and use of school facilities less safe for all young women.

In addition, given the large number of economic, environmental, and health related issues facing our state, devoting this level of attention to attacking a small, marginalized population of people seems a poor use of time and energy.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I urge you to vote “Ought not to pass” on this bill.