

Nex Staples
Gardiner
LD 1002

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Gardiner, Maine
May 7, 2025

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

Thank you, for your time and attention. My name is Nex Staples, I'm a resident of Gardiner, and I'm writing today in opposition to proposed bill LD1002.

Already, 1 of every 3 transgender youth have reported attempted suicide (The Trevor Project), and it is my belief that if we starve children of a place to learn how to be themselves within a welcoming community, this number will only increase.

Growing up as a transgender man in a transphobic household created within me a significant depression. For most of my adolescent years, I felt as though I was living in someone else's body. Often I would isolate myself, or dissociate when in company. Gathering the courage to admit to my peers and teachers that I am transgender, and having them affirm my identity, undoubtedly saved my life by allowing me to feel recognized and supported, and returned to me the mental space to perform well on my academics.

Coming to understand one's identity, whether transgender or cisgender, is a basic part of human evolution from childhood to adulthood. By depriving children and teenagers of a safe place to explore, you hinder their mental and emotional growth, and increase risk of depression and other mental health issues. You have to understand that school is not simply a place to learn academically, but is also where adolescents learn how to interact with others and be a larger part of a whole, a place that harbors every form of growth. For many students, home and school are the only realities they know, and they deserve a place to be respected and acknowledged.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you with everything I have to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD1002.