

Rev. Ian Lynch
Waterville, Maine
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Ian Lynch, I'm a resident of Waterville, and I speak as pastor of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. I am here today in opposition of the bills before the committee today: LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, LD 1704, LD 1337, LD 1432, and LD 380.

Two decades ago, our congregation publicly declared our acceptance and affirmation of all members of the LGBTQ+ community. We have actively welcomed them into full participation ever since. We are hardly alone. Many of the neighboring churches in our denomination here in Maine hold similar positions. Here in Waterville, at least two other congregations in other denominations are likewise welcoming. I personally know close to twenty transexual individuals, including a number of clergy. Not one of them poses a threat to others. None of them chose to transition on a whim, rather, each of them struggled to get to the point of expressing their authentic self.

Creating legislation that is just and fair is the work of the Legislature. Providing a public witness to what is just and fair is a task that many of us in the religious community take quite seriously. My spirit grieves that some of my colleagues advocate prejudice as public policy based on their private understanding of religious texts. When they choose to enforce exclusion within their organizations they are, sadly, within their rights. When they expect the government to also deny inclusion and the rights of minorities, they are dangerously laying claim to authority that should never be assigned to any one group in a diverse society.

I don't expect our elected officials to abandon their personal beliefs, but I do expect them to do all that is possible to serve the common good. When a small group that poses no threat to the majority stands to suffer based on beliefs, it is time to lay those aside and assure them the rights that should be foundational for all.

Still, if any of the Committee members believe that Transgender citizens are unworthy or dangerous because of the teachings of their Christian faith, let

me suggest some other lessons from scripture. The closest that the Bible comes to a term that we would understand as transgender or non-binary is eunuch. In a remarkable story marking one of the first baptisms performed by the early Christian Church (Acts 8:26-44), it is an Ethiopian Eunuch who professes faith and joins the church. That story was surely preserved in order to demonstrate that the very people who were most excluded were to be among the first included in this new movement following the way of Jesus who himself was despised for spending so much time and energy with those who were outcast and despised. The Apostle Paul declared that in the church there should be no male or female for we are all one (Galatians 3:28).

Clearly, the morality of inclusion is not restricted to religious beliefs. The bills before the Committee today may offer on the surface to establish fairness in competition, but that is not accomplished by further marginalizing people who are already at much greater risk of suffering violence at the hands of others, or tragically through depression, by their own hand. If there were a preponderance of evidence that young women post-transition had an obvious, universal advantage, or if the number of cases were even statistically significant, then a public conversation about a legislative response might make sense. The sheer number of bills, along with the willingness to violate privacy with heavy-handed enforcement betrays organized cruelty. It should go without saying that we are better than this.

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