

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton
Portland, ME
May 7, 2025

In Opposition To:

[LD 1002](#): An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate

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

Thank you for taking the time to receive and review this testimony.

I am a voting resident of Portland, Maine, and a religious leader in South Portland, where I serve as the Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ (the Church on Meetinghouse Hill).

I write to oppose the bills before the committee today, which would cause undue harm to transgender students and to public school communities in the state of Maine.

The context for my comments is my Christian faith, which teaches me that all people are made in the Divine image, that diversity strengthens our communities and that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Through pastoral and personal relationships with parishioners, colleagues and family members, I routinely witness what scientific data has confirmed: that human sexuality and gender identity exist on a spectrum. We cannot always see what is happening at a biological (chromosomal, cellular or hormonal) level. **We can listen to the young people who are living in their own bodies and take their experience seriously.** We can choose to believe them when they tell us that they are transgender, just as we expect our own experience to be believed.

The journey toward claiming a gender other than the one assigned at birth is often an uphill climb. I have watched young people wrestle with the tension between their intuitive sense of themselves and a culturally imposed identity. The number of young transgender people who attempt suicide, including dear ones I can name, is staggering (Among other sources, see www.thetrevorproject.org for related research and statistics). The despair I have witnessed, by those who feel forced into a framework that does not fit them, is heart-wrenching.

This is what is at stake: the *life*, mental health and well-being of young people who are being told by bills like this that they do not exist. Transgender women *are* women, by their own testimony and lived experience. Transgender men *are* men. If they have chosen the difficult path of claiming their identity in the face of social opposition, if they have been brave enough to stand up and say, "This is what I know about myself," then they should be respected, not isolated or ostracized.

That should include addressing them by the name they choose. This is the basic courtesy we all expect, whether we use our full name, nickname, middle name, or something else altogether. I do not answer to the name "Ali;" my name is Alison. If you grew up being called "Dusty," you might not appreciate being called "Robert," even if that was the name on your birth certificate. To single out transgender students and tell them that they, alone, do not have the right to be addressed by their chosen name is a clear act of discrimination. It also says, "Who you are doesn't matter to me."

As a pastor, I know that honoring the humanity and dignity of individuals is part of cultivating a healthy community. When we respect one another, honor each other's gifts and bear each other up in times of trial the entire community is the better for it.

Our goal should be to foster healthy school cultures in which all students are affirmed for who they are, have the chance to develop self-confidence in community, and learn to treat one another with dignity. **We can model those commitments in the State of Maine by recognizing and welcoming transgender students.**

To do otherwise is to do harm to our young people and to diminish the richness of our wider community.

For these reasons, I am asking you to vote "OUGHT NOT TO PASS" on this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

The Reverend Alison J. Buttrick Patton

Alison Patton
First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in South Portland
LD 1002

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