

Elias Leach  
Steuben  
LD 1432

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Steuben, Maine  
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Senator Carney, Representative Khun, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

My name is Elias Leach, I am a transgender man. I come from the small fishing town of Steuben, and I am here on behalf of myself, and other LGBTQIA+ people in my hometown and the other surrounding communities that make up downeast Maine. I am here in opposition of the violent bills before the committee today.

Gender identity was adopted into the Maine Human Rights Act in 2005, 20 years ago. I was five when these protections were adopted, and around this time is when I knew I wasn't a girl. I may have been called a girl, and named one, but in my heart and soul I wasn't one. Now did I have the exact vocabulary to express that at such a young age, no, but I knew who I was.

I was always called a tomboy, I didn't mind. Being called a boy actually made me happy. I always had bugs in my pockets and forts built in the dooryard. I was always, and still do, catch frogs, snakes, and other critters. I am still always outside. I rode dirt bikes and four-wheelers and snowmobiles. I played with my brothers action figures and would wear his clothes, even though he would get upset at me.

Now, do these things necessarily make one person a boy or girl, no. But to me, it made me feel whole. It felt right and made me happy. People thought I would just grow out of it. But I never did. There was always an underlying feeling that something wasn't right, no matter how hard I tried to present myself as a girl. Being a girl didn't make sense. My physical being was wrong. I wasn't able to come out as a kid, or even a teen. It took me over twenty years to finally feel safe enough.

When I came out, it felt like the earth had finally started to spin. I was alive for the first time. And there's no better state to be in to live my true life than here. Just because I wasn't able to start my transition until my twenties, doesn't mean other people have to.

Forcing minors to ask permission from unsafe guardians for healthcare is dangerous. A patient's care is between the patient and doctor. Forcing someone with an unsafe home life to come out to others is asking for violence and abuse.

To make others go through what I had to go through is selfish. Keeping Mainers from being happy and healthy is wrong.

There is no better state to grow up in than the state of Maine, and no one can change my mind. We look out for each other, we are there when our neighbors are in need. That is *dirigo*. To lead, to be the guiding star. That is our duty.

To strip our citizens of their rights is not leadership, that's downright fascism. To cause harm and violence to our family, friends and neighbors because of their gender identity is not the Maine way.

According to EqualityMaine, and the Movement Advancement Project, in 2020 there were 60,000 LGBTQIA+ members 13 years or older. This of course doesn't take into account the vast majority of people who are unsafe at home or work that cannot present themselves freely. That is 60,000 out of 1.4 million Mainers. To remove the protections of people like me would do so much harm. It would be a removal of the access to healthcare, workers rights, to be able to move freely within the state and out of the state. Isn't the point of being an American to live freely, happily and safely?

To continue to rob our communities of the limited rights we have, would make a mockery of the state of Maine.

Maine is made up of people from all walks of life. We are the backbone of this nation. It is our job to ensure that everyone, not just in the state of Maine, but all across the

country have a safe, welcoming, and empathetic place to call home. To strip the rights away from Mainers is not just discrimination but violence. Doing so sets a precedent for fascist government officials across the nation to cause harm. It shows to them that stripping the rights of citizens is allowed because of propaganda and paranoia. It is not. It is unconstitutional. Plain and simple.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to pass" on the extremely harmful bills LD1337, LD1432, and LD380.