

Aubrey Bell
Norway
LD 1134

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

My name is Lyn Bell. I'm a resident of Norway. I served my country and my community until my retirements as a Marine and a deputy sheriff. I have continued to serve locally as a teacher, and an elected official in Oxford County.

I write as a representative of the First Universalist Church of Norway, and I am the parent of a transgender child.

I am writing in opposition to the bills before the committee today, specifically LD 1134.

My first experience with transgender students was while my family was living in Washington state and my own child came out as transgender. The schools were supportive, and we were thankful for the stability that provided our child.

After moving to Maine, I began working as a substitute teacher, and I have been elated at the support and recognition my school system gives to their transgender students. For a kid who's struggling with feelings that aren't the same as the kids around them, the acceptance of the staff and students of their preferred name and gender inoculates them against the suicidal ideation and keeps them in school that plague transgender and non-binary individuals. Understand, it is not the condition of being transgender that causes the suicidal ideations - it is the societal response to them that causes it.

Unfortunately, the prevailing ignorance in our society from the compassionless leaders who are unwilling to learn beyond middle school science models, imprints on parents of some of these students. This learned ignorance keeps parents from accepting and properly providing for their transgender children. For those children, the only acceptance they find is in the classroom.

If you enact this proposal, you will do nothing to protect a child's identity. It will leave many of Maine's transgender students feeling as if they will never find acceptance of who they are, and that thinking will take them down a very dark road. If the authors and supporters of these bills wanted to protect children, they would do more to educate and assure the parents of transgender children, rather than turning those children into victims of societal ignorance.

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

Thank you,

Lyn Bell

lynandheather@gmail.com