

May 7, 2025

TESTIMONY OF THOMAS C AVILA

REGARDING:

LD 233
LD 868
LD 1002
LD 1134
LD 1704

To the Members of the Judiciary Committee,

It is nothing short of horrifying that this testimony begins with a list of five separate proposed pieces of legislation that have been written to target a community of children and young people that is estimated to be, in the state of Maine, fewer than 1,200 individuals.

And no member of the committee should lose sight of the fact that the subject of discussion is not the number of children and young people living in a constant state of food insecurity. Not the number of children living in poverty, or a state of being unhoused, or in fear of violence in their homes, or without access to healthcare, dental care, or social services.

The sponsors of these bills have elected to ignore all of these very real threats so that they can instead pursue the favorite pastime of the conservative movement. Setting communities of individuals against one another in the hopes that it will further secure their own positions of power. To foment anger and distrust in the hopes that it will sow division in the name of political gain. To target the weakest and most vulnerable to assert their own supposed strength and authority.

Even more vexing, actions like the proposed pieces of legislation have caused suicide attempts by teenagers to increase by as much as 72% in states where transgender and gender nonconforming youth were targeted by bills that attacked their right to go to school. To play sports. To be kids.

And, if that statistic alone were not enough to cause a rational individual to question the true cost of such pieces of legislation, consider what these bills would require. The policing of who and who is not considered to be a "girl" or a "boy" would presumably

necessitate some form of testing, and any such verification process would necessarily inflict harm.

Consider what it would do to any child or young person to be accused of not being who they know themselves to be. Consider what these practices would mean to the child or young person who might already be a victim of bullying or violence at school or at home. For a set of bills cynically created to "protect" children and young people, consider the increased risk of sexual predation in an unmoderated system where individuals are given the authority to determine the gender of a student athlete or an individual who just wants to use the bathroom while at school.

This is generally the point in a response where benefit of the doubt is given, where one is meant to say that we understand the good intention behind the perhaps wrongheaded response.

I will give no such latitude.

These bills have been proposed for no other reason than we currently live in a country where bigotry has become fashionable. Where attacks on young, trans boys and girls are seen as more politically expedient than preventing acts of violence against these same young people. Where we have decided that, rather than loving our neighbor, we will question their humanity.

These bills are beneath us. They are a mockery to a state with the motto dirigo because they are not about leading. They are about following the very worst instincts of a political movement that has chosen to embrace fear and hatred as their defining characteristics.

I urge the Judiciary Committee to reject all these bills. In a perfect world, it would be with such force and vigor that they never resurface again.