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Hartford
LD 868

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Hartford, ME
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of The Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. I am Dustin Spencer-L'Heureux from Hartford, ME. I work as a therapist in the state of Maine. I am writing this today to express my opposition of the bills that are being presented at the committee today.

These bills will directly impact the physical and mental health of trans and non-binary students across the state of Maine by forcing students to use bathrooms and changing facilities not aligned with their gender, avoiding restrooms when in need, or subjecting people to gender checks if someone is suspected to be born biologically male. . As a teenager, I was one of the students who would avoid using a restroom in school due to being bullied and harassed by boys because I was an openly gay male. I have had long term bladder health difficulties and would be absent from school due to not feeling safe or supported. Restrooms and changing facilities are uncomfortable at the best of times, imagine how at risk the health and well-being of our transgender and non-binary students are if forced to be in spaces that are not just uncomfortable, but not safe for them?

GLSEN reports that 73% of transgender youth avoided bathrooms due to fear of harassment and bullying. The Williams Institute found that 54% of the transgender and non-binary folks experienced physical health problems including UTIs, dehydration, kidney infections and other kidney related problems due to avoidance of restrooms. The bill, as it stands, would target students for using a restroom that is "designated for the opposite sex" based on "sex assigned at birth" which will restrict transgender and non-binary students from being able to use a restroom or changing facility in which they feel safe and comfortable in. This bill does not represent the state of Maine's student body and will cause direct harm to students in the school system.

If this bill were to pass, we would see more physical and mental health concerns popping up in urgent cares, primary care, and emergency departments in our already taxed medical facilities. Students will not have a safe space to practice good hygiene and will be at an increased risk of bullying and harassment from both students and faculty. We will see an increase in absences for students who are not safe to attend school.

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!