

FELIX BOGUE HAAR

Portland

LD 233

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Portland, 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 today in writing, as I am not able to attend in person. My name is Felix Vonder Haar, I'm a resident of Portland Maine, and a proud trans man.

I am writing in opposition of the multiple anti-trans bills being heard before the committee today, specifically LD 868.

Using the bathroom really should be quite a private issue. But for us transgender people living in America in 2025, it has become a talking point for some politicians to fearmonger and sow distrust. Even I, as a full grown adult man, experience real fear when I have to use a public restroom. The fear of being somehow discovered, harassed, or attacked is something I carry with me into every public restroom or changing area.

LD 868 aims to prohibit transgender students from using a bathroom or changing area at school that aligns with their gender identity i.e. the bathroom or changing area that is safest for them. So when this bill talks about making these spaces safer for children, we know the students they aim to protect are the cisgender ones alone.

Research clearly shows that transgender students are at much higher risk of being bullied, when compared to their cisgender peers. According to Maine.gov, transgender students are "twice as likely to have been bullied on school property in the past year", and "three times more likely to have skipped school because they felt unsafe".

Schools have to be safe spaces for everyone, including transgender students. When students feel safe, they are able to learn and grow up into well-rounded, beautiful individuals who will go on to make our state and our world a better place. Too often, bullying and discrimination based on gender identity ends the life of the child on the other end of it. Again, according to Maine.gov "Nearly three quarters of trans students reported depressive symptoms, and half seriously considered suicide in the past year."

Are these statistics something we can all live with? The fact that so many children in our state are even considering ending their own lives before they've even really begun?

I pulled these extremely troubling statistics from a single page on the Maine state government's own website. Bills like LD 868 will encourage bullying of transgender and non-binary students in our schools, as students and teachers alike are empowered to question the gender of students when they enter bathrooms or changing areas.

I urge anyone involved in making this decision, please: do your own research and listen to the other testimonials today. There are lives on the line here. Please vote "ought not pass" on LD 868, and allow transgender students to simply be themselves.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the committee.