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LD 233

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding the extremely important bills under your consideration today.

I am submitting my written testimony to be considered for all of the bills being heard related to protecting rights of Maine's transgender child

My name is Susan Steinman. I have lived with my family in Cape Elizabeth for 35 years. My serious concern with these bills stems from my three decades of working with adolescents and teenagers as a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, first in California and then here in Maine for the past twenty-five years, as well as my experience as a past member of the Cape Elizabeth School Board.

I cannot express enough how vehemently I am opposed to the bills being heard today, both personally and professionally.

The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic Manual (DSM-5) includes gender dysphoria as a diagnosis, but not as a mental illness in the traditional sense. The diagnosis focuses on the distress caused by the incongruence between one's experienced gender and their assigned gender at birth, rather than the gender identity itself. It is understood to be a complex interplay of biological and psychological factors. The DSM-5 includes the diagnosis to help individuals access necessary medical care like hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgeries.

According to The American Academy of Pediatrics in their policy statement regarding Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents:

"Despite some advances in public awareness and legal protections, youth who identify as LGBTQ continue to face disparities that stem from multiple sources, including inequitable laws and policies, societal discrimination, and a lack of access to quality health care, including mental health care."

The Maine Department of Education includes in its Vision statements:

- Learning environments that are safe and supportive for all.
- A pathway to success in school and in life for every student.

Among the Department's strategic priorities is listed:

- Promote EDUCATION, EXCELLENCE and EQUITY for all Maine learners
- Ensure STUDENT and SCHOOL SAFETY, HEALTH and WELL-BEING

We Mainers are all responsible for the safety, health, and well-being of all of our children. As one state senator explained to me years ago, my property taxes go to Augusta, and don't necessarily come back to our town's school system, because we are ALL responsible for the state's children and students.

The National Institute for Health reports: "Data indicates that 82% of transgender individuals have considered killing themselves and 40% have attempted suicide, with suicidality highest among transgendered youths." These are our children! They deserve to feel safe; to have access to the resources that all Maine children deserve; and to not be bullied by peers, parents, teachers, or administrators.

These laws are not good for Maine for the following points/reasons:

They blatantly discriminate against some of Maine's most vulnerable children, adolescents, and teenagers.

They do not reflect the values of "all people being created equal."

They teach our children that it is okay to treat people who are different as "less than"

or “not deserving.”

We have learned of numerous cases of hazing and “bullying” among our high school sports teams. These bills will only feed that despicable mob behavior.

They fuel the fear coming from our Federal government, as was the case in Nazi Germany, that vulnerable populations are responsible for our problems.

I cannot believe that they are legal or Constitutional.

Educators and administrators are subject matter experts when it comes to student safety and individual development. They are the best policy and decision makers regarding individual student needs and student safety.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote, “Ought not to pass” on these bills. Thank you!