

Hail W.
Searsport

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Judiciary, thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Hail. I am a resident of Searsport Maine pursuing a masters degree in counseling. I am a future mental health practitioner in this state.

Transgender and gender nonconforming folks are among the most marginalized populations in the United States, and like many other marginalized groups, have been targeted by the current presidential administration. In 2023, there was a marked increase in attempted suicides for transgender and gender nonconforming youth, directly linked to the passing of anti-transgender laws throughout the United States. For transgender and gender nonconforming youth, these laws act as an indicator of broader societal rejection of our identities, signaling that our identities and bodies are neither valid nor worthy of protection (Lee et al., 2024). Allowing any of the bills proposed today to pass into law, would signal that the state of Maine believes transgender and gender nonconforming bodies and identities are neither valid, nor worthy of protecting. 40% of LGBTQIA+ youth experience physical harassment at school, LGBTQIA+ youth are *more likely* than their heterosexual peers to attempt suicide, with this risk increasing if the child is unsupported at home. Higher risk of attempted suicide is present for transgender and gender nonconforming youth who are Black or Latinx (Sue et al., 2021). Continued harassment and bullying performed on the state and national level will only serve to increase the potential risk of suicide and lifelong psychological damage for transgender and gender nonconforming children and adults. National anti-transgender attitudes and legislation present a highly increased potential for suicide among transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

By the logic exhibited in these bills, one cannot tell someone's gender without a bodily examination. What if a child does not look "enough" like their sex assigned at birth? If there is an X on their birth certificate? If that child is intersex, what will determine their sex? In what ways will children be examined prior to being allowed to use the restroom or changing room that is appropriate for their sex assigned at birth? Who will perform that examination? What will happen if the child refuses the examination? The bills presented today do nothing to protect women or girls, and in fact raise the odds that children will be exposed to sexual violence. These proposals create a dangerous precedent for an adult to have complete autonomy over a child's body. Maine's Coalition Against Sexual Assault lists the statistic that each year 19,000 Mainer's will experience sexual violence, with only 514 instances of that violence being reported to law enforcement. In 2019 50% of the calls answered by Maine's sexual assault crisis line related to child sexual abuse. There is *no way* to enact these policies that will not put children at greater risk of harm.

Trans people are being utilized as a public scapegoat for hatred. Despite the federal government's best efforts to wipe proof of transgender and gender-non conforming existence away, we still *exist*. We cannot abandon those who are the most at risk of harm. We cannot hide. We cannot look away. History cannot be allowed to repeat itself. Our nation is in turmoil, and so it is our duty to care for one another.

Closing this statement, I am reminded of the final lines from the poem First They Came by Martin Niemöller:

"Then they came for me / And there was no one left / To speak out for me."

We must speak out and speak up for one another, before there is no one left.

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

Hail W.
Resident of Searsport Maine

Resources

Lee, W. Y., Nicholas, H. J., Hobaica, S., DeChants, J. P., Price, M. N., & Nath, R. (2024).

State-level anti-transgender laws increase past-year suicide attempts among transgender and non-binary young people in the USA. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 8, 1–11.

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Sue, Derald Wing; Sue, David; Neville, Helen A.; Smith, Laura. *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* (p. 621). Wiley. Kindle Edition.

Stats. (2025). MECASA. <https://www.mecasa.org/stats.html>