

Kerry Read  
South Paris  
LD 1432

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Kerry Read and I live in South Paris. I am opposed to LD1432.

The first words of the Maine Human Rights Act are "To protect the public health, safety and welfare, it is declared to be the policy of this State to keep continually in review all practices infringing on the basic human right to a life with dignity". I commend this committee and all of the lawmakers that honored that duty and included gender identity as a protected human right.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I join thousands of people of faith across this state that are committed to honoring and protecting the full spectrum of gender identity and expression. We believe that being transgender or identifying with any gender other than the one assigned at birth, is a beautiful and divine manifestation of humanity; as is being intersex, or having sex characteristics that vary from what is considered typical. As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm the inherent worthiness and dignity of each person as a core principle. The ability to live authentically as one's true self is central to a person's well-being and spiritual fulfillment.

As a people who put love at the center of our faith, that love calls us to fully embrace equity for all transgender, nonbinary, intersex, and gender diverse people.

LD1432 seeks to remove protections for our most vulnerable citizens. This bill imperils the basic human right to experience freedom from discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation, credit and educational opportunity on the basis of gender identity.

By removing gender identity from Maine's Human Rights Act, our youth, who have fewer rights and access to life-saving and gender affirming care are put at grave risk for experiencing the painful life-threatening impacts of discrimination and denial of their basic human rights and dignity. Laws which restrict the ability to even discuss LGBTQI+ experiences cut youth off from history, mentorship, and freedom of self-expression, causing painful impacts to social, intellectual and emotional wellbeing.

I've watched my community be torn apart by a few people that have spread misinformation, fear and disrespect around the issue of gender-affirming policies in our local schools. I've watched well-qualified, dedicated, thoughtful and respectful school board members subjected to a recall election just because they dared to do the work they were elected to do. I've seen teachers in agony, trying to support students that just need a safe place and a listening ear. I will not believe that this is the world most of us want to live in.

For the health, safety and welfare of all citizens of Maine, I implore you to continue to protect gender identity and all basic human rights to a life with dignity. Please vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD1432.