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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee; thank you so much for your time and for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Caroline Moore, and I'm a resident of Winter Harbor. I am writing today in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

As a Maine educator and coach, I spend a lot of time with young people. In my numerous years of teaching, I have seen the power that our words and actions have on youth, particularly when it comes to valuing their identities.

As an educator, I know that these bills would hurt Maine students, Maine schools, and Maine communities. I fear the ramifications if they are passed. Schools should create safe and supportive environments where students feel seen, feel valued, and feel safe. This means honoring and respecting the names, pronouns, and identities of all students, as well as supporting (and not hindering) students' participation in school and extracurricular activities. I have seen time and time again the importance of honoring students' identities through respecting names and pronouns. Having identity and pronouns respected is a critical step to supporting mental health and is quite literally an element of suicide prevention. Without a basis of safety and support, we can't expect students to learn.

Today, we have the responsibility to show Maine youth and our broader communities that we value and support youth in word, and in action. 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!