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LD 1704

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Alex Stavnesli, I'm a resident of Bar Harbor, Maine, and I am a transgender man. I am writing this testimony to oppose LD 1134, 233, 868, 1704, 1002, 1337, 1432, and 380 being proposed today. As a transgender man, I find it uniquely horrifying that I must write this, let alone these bills even being considered, but the protection of transgender women and youth is imperative.

In regards to bill LD 1134 and LD 233, it seems that the purpose of the bills is only focused on restricting a minority's ability to exist in exchange for a monetary value. Outside of the fact that education funding is being withheld just for accepting someone to be who they are is comparable to blackmail, the Census Bureau's household Pulse survey reports that transgender people only make up 1% of the nation's population as of February 2025, and only 1.59% of Maine's population of 1.4 million people. The concept of losing state funding because of it would be the same as banning people who are left-handed from playing sports. It is a waste of time, it's pointless towards the goal of education and athleticism, and does nothing but ostracize and segregate the student from their peers. There is no benefit other than the suppression of a very small group of people, and this focus on us being some kind of threat is frankly ridiculous.

Moving on to LD 868 and LD 1704. Gym classes in school already have activities that mix the genders and that never seems to be an issue. I myself have been in multiple mixed-gender athletic extracurriculars and had no issues. Sports in elementary, middle, high school and college are meant to be played for fun, exercise, and comradery. Here is a sentence I never thought I would have to mention, but genitalia should not be a concern in sports. What matters is the connection between players and the fun workout while trying to win a game. Additionally, if a transgender girl is forced to play on a men's team, do you think they will be safe? Or will they be scrutinized, harassed, assaulted or even worse than that? This will not protect children. This will hurt them immensely, and it is important to me that you know that while making this decision.

Speaking of the issue of genitalia, adding bathrooms and locker rooms to this ban is equally as ridiculous. If someone is in the bathroom or locker room and has enough time to inspect someone's genitalia for long enough to see someone is transgender, they were already looking at everyone else's genitals for far too long. This is a breach of privacy on part of every person involved, and enables people to feel entitled to stare at other people's genitals "just in case", and confront people on suspicions of being transgender, regardless if the person is transgender or is just a masculine woman with short hair. If I'm going to the bathroom, I'm going there to do my business, wash my hands and leave. If I go into a locker room, I'm going there to change as fast as humanly possible because I hate locker rooms in general. As are a majority of transgender people. If we're talking about bathrooms, it should be about how to make those dividers between the stalls smaller and why they are so absurdly wide in the first place. But I suppose that will be a conversation for another day.

Bill LD 1002, regarding requiring public schools to only refer to children by the name and gender on their birth certificate. I will indulge in a small personal account for this. Even at a young age, I knew that I did not identify with my name given at birth. I would cringe at the sound of it, a deeply uncomfortable feeling that what I was hearing was wrong and wasn't who I really was even before I knew the term transgender. So I started going by Alex to see how it felt. That uncomfortable sinking feeling was immediately replaced with joy and a sense of "belonging" to my new name, and the more I heard people use it, the happier I became. This only increased the first time someone used my new pronouns after coming out.

However, the increase in joy also means a deepening of hurt and sadness when I am

misgendered or if I hear my deadname. It is a complete denial of who I am and of basic formalities. It costs absolutely nothing to use someone's preferred name and pronouns. If you misgender or misname a dog or cat, it's easy to understand switching. But when someone is choosing for themselves, it becomes an issue of nationwide debate. I don't suppose nicknames are included in this bill's ruling, despite nicknames not being on a birth certificate, so it is not about protecting children's identification but rather controlling who deserves to be identified correctly. Additionally, there is a glaring safety issue of transgender children living in transphobic environments. When I was in high school and going by he/him pronouns in secret, it may have been the only thing keeping me from breaking down from all the misgendering and "deadnaming" I experienced daily. This may not exactly resonate with some of you, but this is a type of deep consistent pain that can and has lead to the suicides of children. Voting this bill in will hurt or even kill transgender children, either by transphobic peers or their own hand. As of March 7th 2025, Riley Board of the Portland Press Herald reports that 38% of Maines LGBTQ+ youth have considered suicide as a result of the current political climates hostility. School may be the only escape for these children to be themselves and fight for who they are, and this bill will only shut them out even more, if not end their lives.

Bill LD 1337, which I have already discussed the aspects of sports, also lends itself to the safety of transgender women in situations where they are already presumably homeless. This bill seems to only exist to demean and exploit transgender women who are already struggling with housing and nothing else. There is no increase in recovery, in housing space, or in profitability. There should not even be a debate to "amend the Maine Human Rights Act". If this is for the sake of human rights, then you must consider what will happen to these transgender women if they are unable to find housing or are forced to go into a men's shelter. Transgender women will not be safe in men's shelters because they AREN'T men and will most likely be treated terribly if not outright assaulted.

Bill LD 1432 is more broadly heinous towards the safety of transgender people as a whole. While this bill remains fairly vague in what removal of "gender identity" will entail, it will most likely result in ostracization and segregation of the transgender community from private and public spaces. Currently, Maine is one of only a handful of states that has protections in place for transgender people, with a majority of other states consistently increasing their hostility towards trans people. As of March 2025, the adult anti-trans legislative risk assessment map, Maine is one of only 14 states that remain mostly safe for transgender people due to protections put in place by the State. For the youth, Maine is lower for transgender safety, no longer included with the only 11 states remaining mostly safe. This state is standing strong in the face of transphobic political rhetoric, and I hope your decision today reflects that strength.

Last but not least, Bill LD 380. Gender dysphoria, the leading "cause" of being transgender (as awfully clinical as that sounds) was officially considered a diagnosis for health services back in 2013. Maine began to allow for 16-18 year olds to receive hormone therapy only in 2023, so a move to amend these laws so shortly after enacting them seems to be evident of cracking under political pressure. Just in case you weren't aware of the number of youth receiving hrt (hormone replacement therapy), it is reported that less than 0.1% of transgender and nonbinary youth nationwide have received hrt or puberty blockers from between 2018 to present day. So this law is probably barely used in the first place for transgender children, but it could be a life saver for the few who are lucky enough to do so. I started hrt at 20 years old, and I wish I could have started my transition earlier in my life. Definitely would have saved a lot of self-loathing, I can tell you that much. LD 380 only promises unnecessary roadblocks and discrimination towards a few transgender and nonbinary children.

To close off, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to share my perspectives on these bills with the Committee. I urge you to vote against these bills for the safety of transgender women and children alike, and to show that Maine does

not crack under political pressure in order to protect its citizens. Thank you, and have a nice day.