

Alyssa Skaves
York
LD 1002

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York, ME
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Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Alyssa Skaves, I'm a resident of York, and I am writing in opposition of the bills before the committee today, specifically, LD 1002.

This bill would require public schools to use the name and gender specified on a child's birth certificate. It is unclear how this bill intends to "protect children's identification" when such legislation would undermine student safety in two important ways.

First, this bill flies in the face of research that shows using a student's preferred name and pronouns can cut their suicide risk in half. This statistic, coming from the Trevor Project's 2021 LGBTQ+ survey, has been echoed in many subsequent surveys of transgender youth across the country. If our goal is to 'protect' children, there is no single measure that is more effective than simply calling students by their preferred name.

Additionally, this bill has the potential to harm all students. As an educator who has worked with teenagers in Maine for the past 10 years, I have known students who have legally changed their names to reflect not only their gender identity, but also kinship with caring guardians. One of my students, for example, changed their last name to distance themselves from an abusive family member. While legal, these name changes are not always evident from looking at a child's birth certificate, especially if a child was born outside of the state of Maine, where making changes to official documentation can be more complicated. Being called by a name that is not preferred can be triggering for students who associate certain names with trauma and abuse.

In summary, following the name and gender marker on a birth certificate is not a reliable way to ensure students feel safe in their schools. My career in education has taught me that the best thing we can do is listen to our students, and if listening to a student means respecting their preferred name and pronouns - well, we might just save their life.

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!