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ATTN: LD 1432: An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am grateful for the opportunity to share this written testimony with the Judiciary Committee. My name is Sarah Kearsley and I am a resident of Norway, Maine where I work as a public school teacher. I am writing in opposition of the bills being heard before the committee today, especially LD 1432: An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act.

I am writing to you on behalf of my students: those I have taught in the past, those in my classroom today, and those who I will teach in the years to come. My years in education have shown me how important it is to create a supportive environment for all students. For me, this issue comes down to having respect for all students and honoring the way they would prefer to be addressed, even if their name and pronouns differ from those on a birth certificate.

I do not believe this bill would help address or correct any real issue in Maine schools or communities - I believe this bill is politically motivated and would be quite harmful for Mainers if it passes. The American Medical Association reports that when transgender youth were supported in using their preferred names and pronouns, they saw depression symptoms drop by 71% and a 65% decrease in suicide attempts. Opposing this bill could literally save lives - and I have seen firsthand how impactful it is to support students in this way.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD 1432, as well as the other bills before the committee today.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kearsley