

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

My name is Lily Withington. I am a high school teacher in Portland, as well as a resident in Portland. I write today to testify in opposition to all of the bills before the committee today:

- [LD 233](#): An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding Is Provided to the School
- [LD 868](#): An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools
- [LD 1002](#): An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate
- [LD 1134](#): An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities
- [LD 1704](#): An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex
- [LD 1337](#): An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters
- [LD 1432](#): An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act
- [LD 380](#): An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services

A transgender friend once told me, “For my whole life. I felt like I was living through a pane of glass. And when I transitioned, I got to actually experience my life for the first time.” If you know someone who is transitioned, you will understand what she’s talking about. When a person transitions, the positive change is staggering.

A few months ago, I was visiting with some childhood friends. A friend of mine pulled me aside. With tears in his eyes – I had never seen him cry – he whispered about a mutual friend, who had recently transitioned. “She is doing so well.” People in my life, repeatedly, have expressed the same amazement when our friends have transitioned – we all see, and celebrate, that our transgender friends are finally here with us. They’re present. They’re thriving.

The evidence overwhelmingly shows that untreated gender dysphoria causes increased anxiety, depression, and suicide. The evidence also shows that gender transition is the most successful treatment for gender dysphoria. According to The What We Know Project at Cornell University, there is “a robust international consensus [...] that gender transition [...] improves the overall well-being of transgender individuals.”

The bills before you today eschew a fundamental truth: trans kids exist, regardless of whether the law protects them. My transgender friends attended public school under the conditions proposed in today’s bills. They used the name, gender (and matching pronouns) specified on their birth certificate, they used the bathroom that aligned with their biological sex, they played on the teams that aligned with their biological sex. These conditions didn’t make my friends any less trans. These conditions did, however, afflict very real consequences.

The Trevor Project’s 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People underscores the seriousness a gender-affirming environment. Suicide rates increase dramatically in the circumstances proposed in the bills that are before you today:

- 20% of transgender youth who lived with people who did not respect their pronouns attempted suicide in the previous year, where 11% who lived with people who respected their pronouns attempted suicide.
- 15% of transgender youth who did not have a gender neutral bathroom at their school attempted suicide in the previous year, where 9% who had a gender neutral bathroom at school attempted suicide.

- 18% of transgender youth who went to non-gender affirming schools attempted suicide in the previous year, where 14% of youth who went to gender-affirming schools attempted suicide.
- 15% of LGBTQ+ youth who felt discriminated against due to their sexual orientation or gender identity attempted suicide in the the previous year, where 7% of LGBTQ+ youth who had not felt discriminated against due to their sexual orientation or gender identity attempted suicide.

As an educator, I always want what's best for my students. Bills that oppose a gender-affirming school environment are not the best for my students. The conditions proposed in these bills have severe implications for the young people that attend Maine's public schools. There is only one guaranteed outcome: kids will be harmed.

I urge you to vote "ought not to pass."

Thank you for your time,

Lily Withington