

Testimony in opposition to 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

Rev. Dr. Allen Ewing-Merrill
Portland, Maine
May 8, 2025

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

I am writing as a Mainer from a long line of Mainers, as a member of the clergy, and as a nonprofit leader in Portland, Maine. As a Christian, as a former high school teacher in Maine, and as a parent of teenagers and young adults, I strongly oppose this bill and all of the anti-trans legislation that you are hearing during this session.

I am blessed to know and care about a number of people from the transgender community. Without exception, they are good and upright people who contribute in significant ways to our communities, who love their families, who work every day to make the world a better place. This bill and the others like it are discriminatory and oppressive. They are built around misrepresentations of people I care about — people created in the image of God and beloved by God — people of sacred worth. In short, they will cause harm to people whom God loves.

Our schools ought to be safe, supportive, and inclusive spaces where every student's humanity and dignity are affirmed, where their rights are protected, and where they can receive the best possible education while participating fully and equally in school activities. This bill and the others like it would create hostile and threatening environments — not only for transgender students, but for all students. No one benefits from a school culture that promotes suspicious and invasive interrogation, that makes judgmental assumptions about people's identities, or that aims to exclude, shame, and exercise control through punitive means.

The effect of a bill like this one, if enacted as law, would be to embolden students to target, bully, and harass their trans classmates. Bans like the ones proposed by this bill would empower schools to engage in policing students, pressuring them to adhere to gender norms, scrutinizing girls' bodies, creating environments of fear, distrust, and division. The impact of a law like this would be a blatant violation of privacy for all Maine women and girls. Because of this bill and others, my trans friends are living in fear!

Ultimately, this bill perpetuates dehumanizing stereotypes. Biological sex and gender identity are complex, and each individual is unique. When someone has agonized and prayed and carefully discerned their gender identity and has gained clarity and peace, such that they have courageously requested a specific name and gender identity that reflects their truest self, the least that caring adults can do is to honor their dignity and humanity by respecting their wishes. These are simple acts of kindness, affirmation, and care — and they literally save lives. Any requirement for a school to do otherwise is rooted in prejudice, and its only real impact is to perpetuate prejudice. This is the real question: Do we want our schools to perpetuate prejudice, or do we want to save lives?

I am deeply concerned about the ways in which transgender students have been targeted, hatefully, by those who are desperately seeking to advance a broad regressive agenda that would roll back the civil rights of our LGBTQ neighbors, people of color, women, immigrants, and others. My Christian faith tells me that this is morally and ethically wrong — a direct violation of God's call to love our neighbors as ourselves. My faith tells me that upholding the dignity of transgender students, honoring their sacred worth, and celebrating their unique gifts, abilities, perspectives, and contributions is the morally and ethically right thing to do.

Please do the right thing: pledge your opposition to LD 1002. I am praying for you as you deliberate.

Allen Ewing-Merrill
Portland
LD 1002

My written testimony is attached as a PDF document. Thank you for receiving it.