

Rev. John Allen
9 Cushnoc Ln.
Brunswick, ME

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you.

I am Rev. John Allen. I am the Senior Minister of First Parish Church in Brunswick and a resident of Brunswick.

My Christian faith compels me to offer my voice in opposition to the bills before the committee today.

This is not abstract to me. I serve a congregation that includes several trans and non-binary youth. I have taught their confirmation classes. I have prayed with them. I have watched with joy as they flourished within communities that embraced them.

But throughout my life in ministry, I have also had conversations with youth that break my heart. I have listened as trans and non-binary youth wonder if they are a mistake. They ask if the world might be better off without them.

Whatever other aims these bills may have, they will send an unmistakable message to our trans and non-binary youth that who they are is a problem and that they are not welcomed or wanted.

I am afraid that the collective message of the bills before your committee today could break the spirit of a child in my church or even lead them to harm themselves.

There are, of course, challenges that we need to navigate as we embrace a better understanding of gender diversity. I ask you to entrust churches, schools, sports leagues, doctors, and families to navigate these challenges with the nuance that each individual circumstance demands, rather than taking extreme measures to cut off youth's access to the care and support they need to thrive.

I am a follower of Jesus. Jesus consistently opened his heart to the outcast and maligned and showed them love and compassion that affirmed their most basic human dignity.

Some of you may share my Christian faith, some of you may not, but whether guided by your faith or conscience, I ask you in God's name to please vote "Ought not to pass" on these bills. Thank you.