

Testimony in opposition to LD 380: An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-Affirming Health Care Services

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 communities, our neighborhoods, our schools, and our shelters ought to be safe, supportive, and inclusive spaces where every person's humanity and dignity are affirmed, where their rights are protected, and where each person receives the care and support they need while being safe to participate fully and equally in society. This bill and the others like it would create hostile and threatening environments — not only for our trans friends and neighbors, but for everyone. No one benefits from societal structures that make judgmental assumptions about people's identities, that prevent people from accessing standard-of-care healthcare as allowed by law, or that aim to exclude, shame, and exercise control through punitive means.

The effect of a bill like this one, if enacted as law, would be to deny people life-affirming, life-saving healthcare for our trans friends and neighbors. It would also cause great harm to healthcare providers, who have been following Maine state law for many years, allowing doctors and patients to safely give and receive the care they need. Because of this bill and others, my trans friends and our medical community 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 sought out gender-affirming care, the least that we can do as a society is to honor their dignity and humanity by respecting their identities and ensure that gender-affirming hormone therapy and follow-up care are accessible and safe. This kind of healthcare literally save lives.

This bill compels us to wrestle with some important questions: As a society, do we want to keep people safe? Do we want to protect and uphold everyone's civil rights? Do we believe that every person is created in God's image and worthy of love and respect? Or is it our goal to advance patriarchal systems, to perpetuate prejudice, to enable discrimination, and to encourage violence and fear? Your vote on this bill will do one or the other.

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 380. I am praying for you as you deliberate.

Allen Ewing-Merrill
Portland
LD 380

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