

Ailish Kress
Bowdoinham
LD 380

My name is Ailish Kress (pronouns she/her), and I work as a mental health counselor and part-time as a high school coach (track and field).

Gender-affirming health care for transgender and non-binary folks saves lives. Period. As a mental health care provider, I know that some of the best preventative actions for suicidality are reducing risk factors and triggering events. This bill appears to target teens who already have a risk factor: an unsupportive family, or potentially one unsupportive parent who controls health insurance decisions. In addition, the passage of anti-trans bills has also been shown to increase rates of suicide in trans kids aged 13-17 (Lee et al., 2024). Please keep in mind when sponsoring and passing such bills that you are harming children.

The wording of this bill is also short-sighted: gender-affirming care for cisgender people can include breast reconstruction after breast cancer, hair transplants for men, and hormonal therapies for cis men and women. Many of these types of care may not be medically necessary from a physical point of view, but the emotional security of being able to express your gender as you desire can have huge positive impacts on mental health for people of all genders.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on this bill.

Lee et al., 2024:

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/state-level-anti-transgender-laws-increase-past-year-suicide-attempts-among-transgender-and-non-binary-young-people-in-the-usa/>