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LD 868

Warm greetings to the esteemed Rep. Amy Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Ophelia Hu Kinney. My pronouns are she/her. I live in Scarborough, and I'm a lay minister serving an international organization advancing LGBTQ+ justice in The United Methodist Church. I preach, most often at HopeGateWay, a dynamic nondenominational church in Portland.

I am compelled by my Christian faith to urge this committee, and the full legislature, to vote "ought not to pass" on this bill and on all the bills in this morning's session, which aim to restrict equal access to education, recreation, public spaces, and protection from discrimination and hate-based violence.

The Creator that I teach, the one I learn about daily, is capable of dazzling diversity. You may have heard it said that "He created day and night, the ocean and the land." But between those binaries, God also made dawn and dusk. And where I live is a rich, valuable confluence of ocean and land — a marshland that the Sokokis people call Owascoag: the land of many grasses.

We share this planet with innumerable species that exhibit sex and gender in unexpected ways. From limpets and clown fish, whose sex changes depending on the community's social needs, to hermaphroditic clams and slugs, to turkeys and whiptail lizards who don't require male reproductive cells to produce offspring, to birds like cardinals that are sometimes split down the middle, part male, part female. Just to name a few.

What hubris causes us to impose upon others a gender binary when so little of creation abides by this construct? Why impose this construct on our own children for the sake of our own fears and anxieties?

It is less that trans affirmation is some kind of abandonment of the world we once knew. Rather, trans affirmation is a return to an older understanding of the diversity of creation — humans included.

Such a Creator commands through the stunning array of creation that we have a little more humility. That we keep the doors of our hearts open to one another's beauty, lest we snuff out the image of God in each other. To withhold our state's resources and promote discrimination based on the ideologies of some is not the Maine way.

I am only one of so many Christians in Maine who give thanks for the wealth of creation. Humans exhibit countless ways of being, thanks be to God.

Members of the Judiciary Committee: thank you for your time and your commitment to Maine's children.