

Rachel Spencer-Reed  
New Gloucester  
LD 1002

Rachel Spencer-Reed, New Gloucester, ME

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

Thank you for accepting public testimony today. My name is Rachel Spencer-Reed, I am a resident of New Gloucester, and I am here today in opposition of the bills before the committee today, including LD 1002 which would require schools to refer to students by the name and gender on their birth certificates.

This bill would cause unnecessary harm to both transgender students and to ANY Maine student who uses a name other than the one listed on their birth certificate. No one likes to be called by a name they do not consider to be their authentic name - and this does not only apply to trans kids! My father-in-law has gone by a nickname his entire life rather than his given first name. My children currently use names that are different from the ones on their birth certificates, and they should not be stigmatized at school for knowing who they are and what they want to be called. This bill would also increase discrimination against students whose cultures accept, promote, or require multiple different names, such as one that is legal or ceremonial and a different one for everyday use. And some students choose to use an English name in addition to their given or legal name in a different language.

I am a nonprofit professional who has spent my career working with vulnerable and housing-insecure children, youth, and families. While many families are loving and welcoming to their LGBTQIA+ children, there are still many who reject their children or whose children feel they must stay closeted or risk being kicked out on the streets. According to Chapin Hall's national research, 1 in 30 youth ages 13-17 in the United States will experience at least one night of homelessness each year. This bill will increase the likelihood of schools outing transgender youth to unsupportive and potentially abusive parents.

Maine should not be in the business of legislating discrimination that can increase youth homelessness or make school a less welcoming place for any student. This bill is creating a problem rather than fixing one. Schools should welcome all students with the name they want to be called, and not single out or discriminate against students who have changed or use a name which is different than the one on their birth certificate.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I strongly urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD1002 and the rest of the bills being considered that would increase discrimination in Maine's schools (LD 233; LD 868; LD 1134; LD 1704).

Thank you.