

Catherine Jewell
LINCOLN
LD 1704

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my written testimony with this committee with regard to LD 1704; An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex.

My name is Catherine Jewell and I am a resident of Lincoln, and lifelong resident of Maine. I was raised by parents who were very civic minded where I learned the necessity and value of speaking up for others. If you find value in knowing, I present as a cisgender woman, parent, and grandparent. I am writing today in opposition to the slate of anti-trans bills before your committee.

Each of the bills before your committee today, if adopted, would culminate in one result; harming those who consider themselves under the umbrella of LGBTQ+ humans. And, humans are who they are. In particular, LD 1704 is truly a "bathroom ban". Originators of this type of bill are confused. There is actually no evidence to suggest that allowing individuals to use restrooms that align with their gender poses safety risks to others. Once again, this singles out a population and leaves THEM vulnerable to risk by those who think they don't "fit the mold". The recent re-focus on this issue will not make the vulnerable safer. In fact, more laws surrounding what one can and cannot do only sows division and causes uninvited scrutiny. Multiple studies show that when laws such as these are implemented they actually cause more harm and can embolden harassment and promote cruelty instead of fairness. As I am sure you have found through your own research, The Trevor Project estimates that 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people consider suicide each year in the U.S. These young people are under a great deal of stress just trying to move through life where the "societal norm" is very narrow. What they do not need are unnecessary rules and regulations that will actually cause them to be targeted and likely bullied more, by adults and children alike.

Maine has always been at the forefront of ensuring our state is a welcoming and safe state for all. We already have laws in place that have been thoughtfully passed to help create this environment. The Maine Human Rights Act adopted protections for gender identity in 2005. We should not succumb to the national political agenda that is interfering with State of Maine rights to make our own laws. This agenda could easily lend itself to creating further restrictions on ALL Mainers' civil rights. Our Honorable Governor stood up for the people of Maine against this political onslaught and I hope and trust that you, as a Judiciary Committee will choose the same path.

Thank you for listening to my concerns today. Please remember the beauty of humans are their differences. With the many injustices occurring in our country recently this committee's decision can help protect all the people of Maine by voting ought not to pass.