

Emory Harger
Searsmont
LD 1704

My name is Emory Harger, I am a resident of Searsmont, and I am a transgender American. I urge you to act with common decency and respect to ALL youth, including transgender youth, and vote no on LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704. I want to start by centering us in the words of transgender youth because their voices should be at the forefront of your decisionmaking today. These quotes I'm about to read are from an interview project with a LGBTQ youth group and I am keeping their quotes anonymous for safety purposes.

One youth said - "I really like being here because you get a sense of freedom. You don't have to hide who you are. Here I can be who I am and I don't fear anyone having a bad reaction. I think people should see you for who you are and not just about your gender. Being open about who you are, and knowing who you are deep down should be the new normal."

Another said - "People assume my gender and assume who I am just by my looks and sounds. Before you get to any quick conclusions about me, I'd like you to ask me. . . Why would I go through the work of just being me if it will make it harder for me? But it's worth it if you actually get to be happy."

I love living in Maine because it is a state that prides itself in giving each individual the right to live as they please. This includes respecting the right for transgender people to exist in public and live in our communities in the same ways all other members of our communities can. This bill violates both state and federal constitutional guarantees of equal protection and are discriminatory on the basis of sex and therefore are not constitutional.

I was a young girl once (now I am a transgender man) who used the girls restroom. I looked very masculine as a child with short hair and broad shoulders and was often mistaken for a young biological male. I can easily imagine what scrutiny and violation of privacy I would have been put through if my teachers or a fellow student questioned my biology. This bill puts ALL Maine girls in harms way and opens the door for girls to be scrutinized, violated, and subjected to harassment from anyone who questions their biological sex.

It is the role of public schools to give ALL Maine youth access to a safe learning environment, which includes access to sports, restrooms, and student housing. Remember that transgender youth are just kids trying to have fun, explore their interests, and feel comfortable being themselves. These bills disguise themselves as protecting girls, when we know this is actually about putting transgender youth in the shadows and is just a political reaction to the national dialogue on suppressing LGBTQ rights. Ask yourselves why are these anti-trans bills coming up now when the Maine Human Rights Act adopted protections for gender identity twenty years ago? Passing these bills would reward the federal government's bullying tactics and open the door for further attacks on ALL Mainers' civil rights. Right now, it is transgender rights, but what about when the federal government comes for your rights next? Will we concede or stand up for our states rights?

This feels like such a waste of all of our time, standing up here arguing for our rights against these absurd bills when people in Maine need political leaders to put their energy on quality education, affordable housing, healthcare, natural resources, and issues that are really affecting us; not targeting 1% of the population who face no substantiated threat in our schools and communities. I urge you to act with common decency and respect to ALL youth, including transgender youth, and vote no on LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704.