



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

510 Ocean Avenue
Portland Maine 04103-4936

Telephone: (207) 773-6471
Facsimile: (207) 773-0182

Suzanne C. Lafreniere, JD
Office of Public Policy

Testimony of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese *in support of LD 380*

An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in support of *An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services*. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 48 parishes, it has eight elementary schools, one private elementary school, one diocesan high school and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish. Within the diocese, there are also seven subsidized housing units, four rehabilitation and residence facilities, and two child-care centers. There are three Catholic hospitals operating independently of the diocese as well as Catholic Charities Maine, the state's largest social service agency, which operates as a separate corporation.

The Diocese of Portland advocates for enacting and enforcing laws that create safe communities and promote the common good. This issue is important to Catholics because as people of faith a primary concern is the moral and ethical considerations that should be at the root of our decision making. We all are created in God's image. We all – each of us – possess a basic human dignity. The Catholic Church teaches that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the underpinning of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundational principle of Catholic social teaching.

This bill would repeal the current process by which a minor consents to gender-affirming hormone therapy and follow-up care. Currently minors aged 16 to 18 do not need parental or guardian consent. This bill would take the common sense step of ensuring adults are involved in making life-altering decisions.

The Diocese of Portland opposes the advancement of gender theory, especially in places where young people are affected. Instead of harmful, unscientific approaches to gender and sexuality, we advocate for practices that help people struggling with gender identity disorders find healing and integration. God created us male or female. Our biological sex is not an accident. It is a gift from God and shapes how we participate in His self-giving love. But gender theory, or transgender ideology, that ignores the gifted reality of male and female continues to spread in our society: in our media and our schools, our laws, and our healthcare standard. The results are disturbing and include psychological distress and self-harm for those indoctrinated into believing that their body and self are at odds with each other.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a comprehensive 400-page report on May 1, 2025, reviewing evidence and best practices for treating gender dysphoria in children and adolescents. The [report](#), *Treatment for Pediatric Gender Dysphoria: Review of Evidence and Best Practices*, identifies the serious harm and ethical concerns associated with so-called “gender affirming care.” It concludes that “[t]he risks of pediatric medical transition include infertility/sterility, sexual dysfunction, impaired bone density accrual, adverse cognitive impacts, cardiovascular disease and metabolic disorders, psychiatric disorders, surgical complications, and regret.”

Instead of subjecting children and adolescents to these life-altering interventions, the HHS report calls for a better approach – addressing the child’s distress with psychotherapy, a “noninvasive alternative to endocrine and surgical interventions for the treatment of pediatric gender dysphoria.” This approach respects the unchanging reality of sex and avoids the unethical medical interventions that cause harm in otherwise healthy children, and which have irreversible effects.

Even progressive countries that lead the charge on transgender issues, such as the United Kingdom, Finland, and Denmark, have recently severely restricted treatments for minors. Why have progressive countries begun to restrict what were commonly accepted practices? Because they analyzed the facts and determined that many of the common beliefs were severely short-sighted. Those states and countries have refocused their efforts on early mental health evaluations, prohibiting hormone and puberty blockers, and discouraging immediate social affirmation. They also recognized that the belief that lack of immediate affirmation would lead to higher suicide rates among minors is a claim that lacks any supporting evidence.

Please vote this bill Ought to Pass. Thank you for your consideration.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/