Victoria Bernard
Cliff Island
LD 380

Testimony
Victoria Bernard
Cliff Island, ME
May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,
My name is Victoria Kostadinova Bernard. I am a resident of Cliff Island (Portland), Maine.

I am writing to you in OPPOSITION of the bills before the committee today.

I am an immigrant, now US citizen, who sought asylum in the U.S. and who chose Maine as my forever home 26 years ago. My family fled a totalitarian regime under which citizens had no human rights, could not vote, and where just one anti-government comment could land you in a gulag forever. Microscopic details of everyday life were dictated- down to how we dressed, what we read, and who we loved. We were encouraged to police and report on each other. This meant living in constant fear, in imposed conformity, with self-censorship, with no freedoms, and with distrust of everyone around you. The regime robbed us of our shared humanity. That is no way to live.

My family risked everything to find self-determination and freedom in America, and in democracy. I chose Maine because of our long history of recognizing, respecting, and protecting inalienable human rights as encoded in the Maine Human Rights Act. I chose Maine because of our culture of individual dignity, our culture of inclusion, of tolerance, of recognition of shared humanity, of respect, and our culture of welcoming and loving our neighbors. We're a small state, we know each other, we care, and we have each other's backs, every single day. Living on a small Maine island teaches you that we're all human, and we're all in this together. Trans Mainers are our friends, our neighbors, our family. They represent no threat to anyone. They just want to be themselves, and to live a normal life in peace and with the same freedoms and dreams as any of us. We know them and we love them. They deserve to be able be themselves, without fear. That means having access to gender-affirming healthcare, and being in the care of medical providers who are free to practice without fear. To be able to feel like you are in a body you recognize as your own is human, and a basic right. LD 380 would put this in jeopardy, at a crucial time for transgender youth. They are simply human, just like everyone else. The progress we have made in Maine toward protecting the human rights for all citizens regardless of gender or sexual orientation is what has made so many Mainers able to just live and simply be themselves, freely. It's a hallmark of a loving society, it is good, and is what any civil society should aspire to. I am proud to be a Mainer.
The bills before you today are shameful, and fly in the face of our cherished and caring community. Can you imagine your own child submitting to a dehumanizing and traumatizing gender conformity check??? What if your daughter is taller and stronger than other girls- does that give someone the right to question and confirm her gender??? NO!!! And who would you give that kind of intrusive authority to? It's repulsive. This kind of surveillance is demeaning and dehumanizing for all girls, and all children. Think about the far-reaching implications: These bills open the door to surveillance, to fear, to suspicion, to repression, and intimidation, to sexual harassment, and universal distrust. These are the very things my family fled from. Who would want this kind of environment, this kind of future for their child? Why would we choose hate, fear and distrust? Further, these bills threaten the very LIVES of our friends, our neighbors, and our schoolchildren. Just by being introduced and given a hearing, these bills are traumatizing our already vulnerable trans population. This is bullying and hate-mongering of the highest degree, and a shame-faced assault on our caring society, not to mention a threat to the Maine Human Rights Act. We can

do better, and we need to do better to protect all of our collective futures.
Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on all of these bills today. Thank you!
Victoria K Bernard