

Abigail Perry  
Starks  
LD 1002

My name is Abigail Perry. But most people in my life don't know me by that name. Instead, I go by Abbie. If this bill were enacted, I would not be able to be called that in school, as that is not the given name on my birth certificate.

In fact, I wonder if Senator Timberlake ever goes by Jeff. Nope, no longer if this bill is allowed. How about Rep Griffin? I guess no more Abby. Or Abbie. Or Abbey. Or Abi. Rep. Soboleski? Sorry Mike, we don't know you anymore. Rep. Haggan is no longer Kim. Rep Eder? Maybe his given name is John, but perhaps it's Jonathan. In which case, we need to update his legislative page. Oh, and he was afforded the right to change his political party a few years ago. How nice to be allowed the freedom of choice. Let's not remove that freedom from others.

This bill mandates that public schools refer to students by the name and gender listed on their birth certificates unless a parent provides written permission or documentation of a legal change. While the intent may be to protect children's identification, this policy would have harmful consequences for transgender and gender-diverse youth.

For many transgender students, their gender identity may not align with the designation on their birth certificate. Requiring schools to use the name and gender on the birth certificate can invalidate a student's identity and cause significant emotional distress. It can also lead to increased bullying, isolation, and mental health challenges.

In situations where a parent does not support their child's gender identity, this bill could force schools to disclose sensitive information, potentially putting the child at risk of harm. Not all children have supportive home environments, and enforcing this policy could exacerbate existing tensions and lead to unsafe situations for the student.

Maine has made strides in recognizing and affirming gender diversity. The state now offers a nonbinary option on birth certificates, allowing individuals to choose an "X" gender designation. This progressive step aligns with the understanding that gender is not strictly binary and should be recognized as such in all official documents and records. Enforcing a policy that disregards this understanding undermines the state's commitment to inclusivity and equality.

I urge the committee to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1002. Instead, I encourage the development of policies that respect and affirm the identities of all students, promote inclusivity, and protect the well-being of transgender and gender-diverse youth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.