

Jennifer Blossom  
Farmington  
LD 868

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Jennifer Blossom, I am a resident of Farmington, and a clinical child psychologist. I am here today to voice strong opposition to LD868 and the other harmful school bans presented before the committee this morning.

As a mental health professional, I have seen the direct impact of anti-trans rhetoric and policies on children and teens. In my clinical work, I specialize in working with youth with anxiety, depression, and at risk of suicide. I have listened to children tell me about being bullied and excluded at school, just because of who they are. I've sat next to a teen in a hospital bed after attempting suicide because their school told them that who they were was "wrong," that they weren't allowed to wear clothes that matched their identity. As anti-trans speech has gotten louder and louder across our country, I have been grateful that our home state, Maine, has decided to stand up for what is right, to protect trans rights.

Beyond my clinical work, I'm also a scientist. There have been numerous studies looking at the impact of anti-trans school policies. The data are clear. Harmful school policies increase risk of truancy, assault, and suicide. Students who attend schools with harmful anti-trans policies report increased risk of suicide, with 55% of youth reporting seriously considering suicide in the past year. Youth exposed to suicide attempts and death also face increased risk, up to 50% attempting suicide themselves. Youth who live in rural communities are especially at risk. Passing LD868, or any of the anti-trans bills presented to the committee this morning has the very real potential of harming all Maine youth.

Conversely, schools that foster support and inclusion protect all youth from harm – students are more likely to support each other or seek out help from a trusted adult when needed. Please vote today to support Maine's youth – I strongly urge you to vote "Ought not to pass" on LD868 and the other harmful bills presented this morning.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning.