

Sarah Vatter
Portland
LD 868

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Sarah Vatter, and I'm a Portland, Maine resident. I am respectfully in opposition to the anti-trans bills currently before the committee.

As a member of this community, I have witnessed firsthand the struggles that transgender Mainers, especially our youth, face daily. These bills would deepen the isolation, discrimination, and mental health challenges that many already endure. Transgender youth in Maine are at a disproportionately high risk of depression and suicide—over a third seriously considered suicide last year, and half experienced depression⁶. These are not just statistics; they represent real lives that could be saved by support and acceptance, not harmed by exclusionary laws.

What many may not realize is how critical affirming environments are for all youths, which includes our trans youth. Maine's transgender children often face social isolation, and lack of access to appropriate healthcare, especially in rural areas. Passing these bills would strip away protections and I believe send a message of rejection. As we know how vulnerable the youngest of our citizens are to a community that doesn't give them a voice, I worry passing these anti-trans bills could increase the risk of harm and suicide, causing lifelong damage. The Maine Human Rights Act, which includes gender identity protections, reflects our state's values of privacy, dignity, and inclusion—values that these bills threaten to undermine. If these bills pass, transgender youth will face increased discrimination in schools, sports, and healthcare, leading to further marginalization and suffering. Conversely, rejecting these bills affirms Maine's commitment to equality and the safety of all its residents.

Respectfully this legislation is an overstep of government distracting from the actual urgent issues facing Maine families. Instead of fostering division, I implore you not to support these bills as we should be focusing on policies that support mental health, education, and well-being for all children.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills.