

Senator Carney, Representative Khun, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for considering my testimony. I am writing today to express my strong opposition to many of the anti-trans bills before this committee today, but in particular LD 1704 - "An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex."

As a boy growing up in Maine, I was a huge fan of Star Trek. The Original Series and first five movies were practically scripture to me, and were how I learned about the Vulcan concept of Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations, or IDIC. It's the fundamental belief that a society is made more vibrant and durable by celebrating and understanding the variety of life experiences of its members.

When I was in the 6th grade, I joined a local chapter of a Star Trek club in Sanford. I made new friends from all walks of life, many older than me, but we all had the same fundamental passion for Gene Roddenberry's vision for the future. About a year in, I noticed that one of our regular members who I'd been friends with had been absent for a time from our monthly meetings and wondered how she was doing. I was told that she'd been dealing with some personal issues, but that she was doing okay.

Several months later, we were having a potluck get together at one of our houses and nerding out about the latest episodes of Voyager, including my absent friend. Before they got there, one of the adults explained to me that they were going by a different name now, and asked to be treated as a man instead of a woman. I was by that time probably 13 or 14 and had never heard of a trans person before. Despite that, because I was surrounded by adults who were all understanding and accepting, I immediately understood that while this was unusual, that there was nothing wrong. I accepted my friend's life change without a second thought, and was glad to see him happy for the first time in quite some time.

I've looked back on that experience many times as an adult, and how differently I could have responded to my friend's decision to come out publicly and express himself the way that he really felt. At that age, it would have been much easier to laugh and to ridicule than to learn and accept him for being different from me. I think about how incredibly brave he was to do so at the time, because as you may recall, the 1990s were a very tumultuous decade for the Maine LGBTQIA+ community. And I wish that he hadn't needed to be so brave, nor wait until well into his own adulthood to come out and live his truth.

Honored members of the Judiciary Committee, now you are the adults in the room. Bills such as LD 1704 are designed not only to restrict the rights of trans kids in Maine from living their lives as who they know themselves to be. They are also crafted to tell others that it is okay to treat these people, who are our friends and neighbors, as different and not worthy of our love and respect. That they pose a danger to the rest of us if we allow them to use a different bathroom. This is not only wrong, but it is also discriminatory and hurtful. I urge you to be the role models that this state needs, to embrace the principles of IDIC, and to vote ought not to pass on not only LD 1704, but on every bill before this committee that purports to "protect" women and children by trampling the rights of the most vulnerable Mainers. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony, and for your continued service to our great state.

Shaun Donnelly,  
Arundel