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LD 1704

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

Thank you for hearing my voice on these issues today. My name is Jess Huddy and I'm a resident of Waterville. I'm also a member of the trans community, and am writing in strong opposition to the slate of bills in front of you this morning.

It is no secret that trans folks have risen to the forefront as the most recent targets of our polarized political atmosphere in the last few years. We have seen a major spike in violence towards trans folks according to the Human Rights Campaign (<https://reports.hrc.org/an-epidemic-of-violence-2024>). Hateful and misinformed rhetoric about trans people continues to be spread through our media and government as a way to fearmonger the public into a frenzy against a vulnerable group. This isn't the first time we have seen our country turn on marginalized communities to create divisiveness; this is a long held tactic that has time and again proven to be universally condemned a few decades later (i.e. the Jim Crow laws or Japanese internment camps during WWII).

Creating these divides and discriminating against trans folks only furthers the hurtful animosity between our communities. Specifically, the bills you are considering this morning are truly about controlling children by:

Denying them the space and opportunity to figure out who they are
Denying them the ability to participate in sports, where they would learn teamwork and collaboration skills, in addition to the physical health benefits of being active
Denying them the right to self-identify with a chosen name or nickname, or even use a bathroom at school

All of the above points are ultimately dehumanizing and cruel, not to mention sexist, homophobic, and transphobic.

Kids are shown to grow up feeling connected, safer, and happier within their community when they are allowed to express themselves freely and engage in affirming social spaces. We also see the reverse happening with discriminatory bills such as these taking effect in other states, treating gender and sex as something to be scrutinized if anyone strays from society's expectations of "traditional" male or female.

Both cis and trans folks suffer from this atmosphere of suspicion — we are seeing incidents of cis folks getting "transvestigated" for seeming too gender ambiguous and young children being asked to prove their sex at birth based on visual assumptions. Again, this harkens back to history — it's not a stretch to connect this directly to the mid-1900s, where anyone not wearing at least three articles of "correctly gendered" clothing could be arrested. These are all scare tactics, worded and enforced in different ways but ultimately meant to snuff out freedom of self-expression and scare queer folks back into the closet and out of public life entirely.

We do not stand to benefit as a society by villainizing trans folks. In a time of economic and political uncertainty, is this really how we should be treating each other? Trans people are not invading bathrooms for the sake of preying on cis women — see the same predatory myths about the gay community that have been rehashed and recycled over the decades. We aren't seeking HRT for the sake of becoming an Olympic level athlete. We're just trying to live happy and fulfilling lives like everyone else. Let's make a positive difference in the history books this time and not follow the path of blind bigotry. Let us be the State that leads the way to a more empathetic and understanding future.

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