

## Testimony in Opposition of LD 1704

Honorable members of the committee,

My name is Katie Brydon, and I am testifying today because I am a deeply concerned parent of two daughters and a teacher. My testimony below is submitted as a private citizen, but I think it's important to note that I also serve on the School Board for the Bangor School Department. Please note that this testimony is in no way a reflection of the entire Bangor School Department Board, but instead, I make it known so that you understand my experience and reasons in asking that you please reject this bill. As a School Board member, I took an oath to uphold a learning environment that puts kids first. This bill flies directly in the face of safety, equity, belonging, and trust – all of the key qualities a student needs to learn and thrive in school. I serve, as you do, because I believe in fostering safe, inclusive, and equitable environments for all people. Please do not pass this bill, which is in direct opposition of these beliefs. The very notion of LD 1704 – a bill seeking to prohibit school administrative units from adopting policies that allow transgender students to use restrooms aligning with their gender identity – directly contradicts these fundamental values and fills me with profound alarm.

As a lifelong Mainer, I cherish our state's inherent respect for privacy and the understanding that we should all be allowed to live our lives without unnecessary intrusion. This bill directly attacks that fundamental Maine value, and it does so at the expense of some of our most vulnerable young people.

Like LD 868, this Bill perpetuates harmful stereotypes. It is crucial to reiterate that **transgender individuals are not a threat to the safety of others. In fact, the data clearly indicates that transgender individuals are disproportionately more likely to be the targets of violence and discrimination, including harassment and assault.**<sup>1</sup> To frame this issue as one of protecting cisgender students from transgender students is not only inaccurate but deeply harmful, as it further marginalizes a population already at significant risk.

LD 1704, like LD 868, operates under a false premise. It suggests that allowing transgender students to use restrooms consistent with their gender identity somehow compromises the safety of their cisgender peers. This simply is not borne out by evidence or experience in the many school districts, including our own in Bangor, that already have inclusive policies in place. What this bill *will* do, however, is create a hostile and discriminatory environment for transgender students, forcing them to either use facilities that do not align with their identity, leading to significant distress and potential danger, or to avoid using the restroom altogether, impacting their health and well-being.

1. Intimate Partner Violence in Transgender Populations: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Prevalence and Correlates - PubMed Central

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As the parent of two daughters, I am particularly concerned about the unintended consequences of this legislation on *all* girls. By focusing on policing who belongs in which restroom based on an arbitrary assignment at birth, LD 1704 inadvertently invites scrutiny and assumptions about all girls. If a girl doesn't conform to someone's narrow idea of how a female should look or act, might she be questioned? Might she be made to feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in a space that should be safe and private? This bill opens the door for precisely the kind of intrusive and judgmental behavior that we, as Mainers, generally strive to avoid. I want my daughters to be able to use the restroom at school without fear of being questioned, scrutinized, or having assumptions made about them based on their appearance or behavior. I want people to mind their own business, plain and simple.

Furthermore, this bill undermines the autonomy of local school districts to create policies that best serve our students and communities. We, as your local representatives and educators, are on the ground, working directly with students and families. We are best positioned to understand the needs of our student population and to develop inclusive policies that promote safety and respect for everyone. LD 1704 is a state-level overreach that disregards this local expertise and imposes a potentially harmful mandate from above.

The safety and well-being of *all* students should be our priority. Creating a discriminatory environment for one group of students does not enhance the safety of others. Instead, it fosters a climate of fear, exclusion, and misunderstanding. We should be working towards creating schools where every child feels safe, respected, and affirmed for who they are. LD 1704 moves us in the opposite direction.

I urge you to reject this harmful and unnecessary legislation and to trust our local school districts to create inclusive environments that respect the dignity and privacy of all students, without inviting unwarranted scrutiny and assumptions about our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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