

Ashley Schumacher
Freeport
LD 1704

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

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Committee's process today. My name is Ashley Schumacher. I am a resident of Freeport, a registered nurse working in school health offices, a parent of a public school student, and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. I am submitting this writing in opposition of the following bills before the committee today:

LD 233, An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding Is Provided to the School

LD 868, An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools

LD 1002, An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate

LD 1134, An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities

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 someone with 17 years in the caring profession of nursing, a 2008 graduate of the University of Maine with a BS in Nursing and a BA in Women's Studies, and a nonbinary and queer individual with a family of my own, I have seen firsthand how the inclusion of transgender and gender expansive young people in our school communities has benefitted every Maine student. Being more accepting of marginalized groups harms no one and, in fact, betters us as a whole.

Sadly, I have also seen firsthand how harmful it is to all students when we exclude transgender students. As a young person coming of age in Maine at a time when sexual orientation and gender identity were not protected under Maine law, I did not see myself reflected in the world around me. I therefore made the false assumption that because I was different, that I was wrong, that I did not belong. Because in part of this lack of representation and inclusion around me, I physically harmed myself as a teen, nearly ending my own life. Today, as a school nurse substitute in multiple schools in my home region, I can tell you without doubt that transgender and gender diverse students do exist everywhere in Maine. That ought not sound like a threat to any members of our government, but a call to protect all of our state's youth. Our Maine transgender youth are not scapegoats to be used for political gain. They are real young people trying to navigate this world, who are as deserving of care, support, and legal protection as any other child in Maine.

Today you will hear from experts on the many research studies that clearly demonstrate why inclusion of transgender and gender expansive youth across all areas of our society is beneficial to all of us and harms no one. To be clear: transgender youth are some of the least likely people to perpetrate sexual violence in our communities. Please take my testimony as yet another voice of reason and call to prohibit policies that disinclude one of the most vulnerable groups of people in our state: transgender youth.

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

Ashley Schumacher, RN, BSN, BA Women's Studies