

**Diane Money
South Berwick, ME
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Judiciary,

Thanks so much for the opportunity to give written testimony to you today. My name is Diane Money and I reside in South Berwick. I'm both a family member of a transgender person and a Clinical Social Worker in private practice in York.

I'm here in opposition to the proposed bills LD233, LD868, LD1002, LD1134, LD1704, LD1337, LD1432, LD380. I'm heartbroken and disappointed in the number of bills proposed that would unfairly hurt and jeopardize the mental health of transgender students and athletes.

In my therapy practice, I have seen the harm done when transgender students aren't allowed to be addressed by their chosen name and the pronouns that reflect their gender identity. There is a high risk of suicide associated with transgender students who aren't affirmed by their name and pronouns. The increased risk of suicide goes down dramatically when parents and people in their lives use their names and pronouns. It validates their very existence and decreases their anxiety and feelings of alienation.

My own family member had mental health problems during high school due to the fear of being harassed about their gender identity and thus hiding it. They may not be alive today if they hadn't had the access to a gender affirming environment in college, a gender affirming mental health and medical care, and supportive family and friends.

I'm very concerned that these bills would give a message that transgender girls should be shunned and not recognized. These bills would allow for invasive gender checks on girls, which would be traumatizing. It would also empower individuals to harass and bully girls who they may think are transgender, either adding further trauma to a transgender girl, or causing harm to a girl who may look more masculine or be very tall. These bills state they will protect girls, when really they will hurt girls and violate their privacy and rights.

My own personal experience and the respectable and valid research that has been done show that transgender girls need to be allowed to participate in sports and that it helps reduce the stigma that unfair exclusionary practices have on them. It

also improves relationships between everyone on the team and leads to improved skills in teamwork and acceptance.

These bills should not be passed. I believe Maine is a place that honors the human rights of all its citizens. LD 337 and LD1432 wants to exclude transwomen and girls from the same rights that everyone else has. This is wrong. Changing the Human Rights Act to exclude certain groups of people is a dangerous precedent that could lead to more exclusions and prejudiced decisions.

Shelters already keep women and girls safe and don't need to put invasive procedures in place or unfair restrictions on homeless people who are already vulnerable and discriminated against.

LD 233, LD 868, and LD 1134 are discriminatory on the basis of sex and therefore are not constitutional. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination and doesn't exclude transgender or intersex individuals from it.

Any attempt to strip Maine's federal funding for protecting trans people is a federal overreach because it is inaccurate about the law and Maine acted in accord with law at all times. Passing this would reward the federal government's bullying tactics and open the door for further attacks on Mainers' civil rights, but it won't make Maine more safe or fair for anyone.

If these laws are passed, I'm very worried about the lives of transgender girls and all girls. Students will experience more anxiety, depression, and there will be more suicides. Mental health care is already insufficient to handle the needs of people with mental health concerns. The mental health system will become even more overwhelmed and deficient. There will be an increase in violence against transgender girls, who already face the most harassment and abuse, especially Black transwomen.

I will continue to advocate for transgender rights because they are human rights. Unfortunately I may have to leave the state if it becomes unsafe and harmful for transgender people.

I know parents care about their children and wouldn't want policies that would hurt their children or their children's friends. By failing to pass these bills, you will be sending a message to the entire transgender population and those that love them in this state and other states that Maine values all human rights and that transgender girls have a right to be themselves and be included in sports: be

allowed to go in the bathroom that aligns with their gender and won't be barred or erased from their schools or community activities.

Thanks again for the opportunity to share my perspective with this Committee. I urge you to vote **Ought Not to Pass** on these bills. Thanks!

Best Regards,

Diane Money