

Hi, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sass Borodkin, I live in Skowhegan, and I'm writing today in opposition of all eight of the bills being heard today.

I'm writing from three vantage points – as a nonbinary person who is part of the transgender community, as a family member of multiple young trans people, and as a person who created and ran a safe space drop-in for LGBTQ+ youth that drew 10-20 young people weekly for roughly three years before the pandemic.

When I started the drop-in space, I thought it would be a sweet little gathering once a week for queer and trans young people to get together to play games and just have some fun. Shortly after starting it, I found that I needed to go get my certification in Mental Health First Aid from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) to hold the space responsibly due to the high occurrences of mental health crises I kept needing to manage week after week. Time and again the reason these young people were in crisis, many of whom were professing a desire to die, boiled down to not being accepted for who they were by people they loved and by society at large.

There are a lot of statistics and points you're going to hear today about sports and civil rights and the process of state law, but I'm wanting you to think about another statistic and point, and it's the one that suggests that the Trevor Project estimates that more than 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people (ages 13-24) seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S. — **and at least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds**¹. According to the 2023 US National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People², **roughly half of all trans and nonbinary youth attempt suicide annually**.

The bills before you today will undoubtedly increase the successful and attempted suicide rate in Maine for trans and nonbinary young people who will feel discriminated against. Please don't disregard that inevitable truth. And please don't disregard the fact that connection and acceptance are unequivocally some of the most successful antidotes to the isolation that breeds suicidal ideation – both of which these bills will sharply curtail. Being able to go to the bathroom, playing school sports, and being called by the name that fits best are all pretty basic ways of simply feeling human and accepted for who you are. Please help young people in the state to feel safer by being on the right side of this thing. I'm literally begging you.

Thanks for listening. Please vote ought not to pass across the board.

¹ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/estimate-of-how-often-lgbtq-youth-attempt-suicide-in-the-u-s/>

² <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/>