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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee. I'm a lifelong Mainer, a Bangor resident and I'm writing on behalf of Maine's children. I strongly oppose the bills that are scheduled for committee review this morning: LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704. These bills target transgender youth in ways that are not only discriminatory but also deeply harmful to their mental health, safety, and educational opportunity. These proposals do not support safety, fairness, or equity; they institutionalize exclusion. They bar students from sports, bathrooms, and school facilities based solely on gender identity, and in doing so, they violate the dignity and humanity of young people already at disproportionate risk for bullying, isolation, and suicide.

Let's address the truth: transgender people are not new. Trans athletes are not new. Trans athletes have been participating in school and competitive sports for decades, quietly, respectfully, without dominating their peers. If there were a trend of unfair advantage, we would have the data by now. But there is no epidemic of trans athletes taking over girls' sports. That narrative is a myth, created to justify bigotry. These bills postulate problems that don't exist, while creating very real harm for transgender youth by limiting their opportunities through othering.

Similarly, LD 868 and LD 1704 push the false and deeply damaging idea that allowing trans children to use the bathroom that matches their identity somehow endangers others. But there is no evidence that trans children are a threat in school restrooms. On the contrary, what is well documented is that trans students experience bullying, harassment, and violence when forced to use restrooms that don't align with their identity. Thus, these bills don't protect safety, they compromise it. LD 1002 would require schools to ignore a student's chosen name or gender unless legal hoops are jumped through. But let me be clear: a child using a chosen name is not a threat to their identity, it's a sign that they're finding it. It's an act of self-knowledge and often, survival. To deny that small but powerful form of recognition is not neutrality or protection. It's rejection. It's malice.

All of these bills are predicated upon fear, fear of people who are different, people who don't conform, people who are brave enough to live authentically despite the risk. But that fear is not an excuse for discrimination. That prejudice is not an excuse for government overreach. How a child chooses to identify, how they express themselves, how they live authentically are deeply personal decisions that should remain outside the reach of government control. These bills will not stop trans children from existing, they will just punish them for existing. They are not about safety, fairness, or parental rights. They are about control and marginalization. They are about shrinking the public space trans people are allowed to exist in, starting with children who just want to be.

So, I urge you to vote no on these harmful bills. They are nothing more than part of a larger national movement to strip away the rights of transgender people under the false pretense of protecting others. There is no crisis of trans children threatening school sports, bathrooms, or locker rooms. The only crisis here is the emotional toll these debates are taking on some of our most vulnerable students, our children, who deserve not just tolerance, but full belonging. Trans kids are not a threat to anyone's childhood. They are just trying to have one. I urge you to not let fear write our laws. I urge you to let empathy, evidence, and equity guide us instead. Let Maine lead the way in protecting our children by rejecting these proposals. Thank you for your time and commitment to listening to your constituents.