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LD 868

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on LD 868.

I'm writing today as a teacher, a foster parent, and a member of the Religious Society of Friends in opposition to LD 868. Having school be an affirming space for transgender and nonbinary youth saves lives. As a teacher, I have seen how seemingly small actions that affirm or contradict young people's identities have large impacts on their mental health, school performance, and feeling of safety - I'm thinking specifically of the relief of a former student when I was able to help him get his name changed on his school email. As a foster parent, I know that LGBTQ youth are over-represented among foster youth and youth who seek emancipation, with the result that their support networks are shattered and must be rebuilt. As a Quaker, I know that each of us are sacred and equally deserving of love and compassion, and that truth is found both by looking inward and through community discernment. Loving care for children and the most vulnerable around us is how we bring about God's kingdom on earth.

If passed, this legislation would directly harm some of Maine's most vulnerable youth. Transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming youth are disproportionately at risk for thoughts of suicide - a 2024 survey found 46% of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the last year. Attending a school that is affirming and living in an affirming community both significantly reduce suicidality for transgender and non-binary youth, as does access to gender affirming care. Furthermore, this legislation harms all who identify as girls by encouraging extra scrutiny on them and how they live out their gender.

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