

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 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

May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Eileen King, the Deputy Executive Director for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 1002, which mandates that public schools must refer to a minor student by the name and gender listed on their official birth certificate, unless written permission is provided by a parent or guardian for a different name. While we understand the intent of this bill to protect children's identification, we have concerns regarding its impact on the fluid nature of identity and peer interactions in the school setting.

In everyday life, students often create nicknames for one another—names that evolve over time and are reflective of personal connections, friendships, or even inside jokes. These names, while not official, can stick among peers and carry meaning within the school community. Forcing schools to refer to students exclusively by the name on their birth certificate disregards the dynamic and organic nature of these student relationships. Nicknames can be a vital part of how children express their identity, interact with friends, and navigate social environments. They are not necessarily an official or permanent change of name but are part of a developmental process where children explore different aspects of their identity.

Additionally, the requirement for parental permission or legal documentation to use a different name places unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles on students and families. Students may feel pressured to seek official consent for a change that is simply part of their daily interactions, leading to confusion or discomfort among peers and teachers.

In conclusion, while L.D. 1002 seeks to ensure accurate identification in schools, it fails to account for the flexible nature of student identities and the informal, evolving nature of peer-created names. I urge the Committee to consider these factors and oppose this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.