

Testimony Opposing LD 1704

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and other members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Jess Knox, and I am submitting this statement as a lifelong Mainer, a father, and a straight white man who feels very strongly in the right of every child to feel safe and supported in their school. I write today in **strong opposition** to LD 1704.

LD 1704 proposes to prohibit Maine schools from adopting policies that allow transgender students to use restrooms aligned with their gender identity. I urge the committee to reject this bill for three key reasons.

1. Schools Know Their Students Best

As a parent, I have personally observed the dedication of Maine's educators in cultivating supportive and healthy school environments. Our teachers, principals, counselors, and administrators understand their students and recognize the needs of their local communities. They are already engaged in thoughtful and diligent efforts to support all students, including transgender youth, in ways that promote inclusion and safety.

LD 1704 would remove decision-making from local schools and impose rigid, one-size-fits-all restrictions from the state level. This would undermine local leaders' ability to respond to the needs of the students in their care.

2. The Bill Creates Harm, It's Not About Safety

Supporters argue that this bill aims to enhance safety. However, there is no proof that inclusive restroom policies lead to safety issues. In fact, what *poses* a threat is exclusion; compelling transgender students to use facilities inconsistent with their affirmed identities heightens their chances of experiencing bullying, isolation, and mental health difficulties.

Schools that choose to adopt inclusive policies are not creating problems; they are solving them. These policies help vulnerable students feel seen, supported, and respected—which improves outcomes for *all* kids.

3. We Should Trust Our Schools, Not Micromanage Them From Augusta

Passing LD 1704 would send a message that the state does not trust local schools to act in the best interest of their students. It would introduce unnecessary political interference into areas that should be guided by care, compassion, and professional judgment.

As a parent, I want my children—and all children—to go to schools that can make the best choices for the students they serve. This requires trusting educators to consider the needs of their communities while dismissing broad mandates that complicate their work.

I kindly request this committee to reject LD 1704. Allow Maine's schools to keep engaging in the important work of fostering supportive environments where every student — regardless of their background — can succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jess Knox
Portland, Maine