

Rachel Spencer-Reed
New Gloucester
LD 380

Rachel Spencer-Reed, New Gloucester, ME

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

Thank you for accepting public testimony today. My name is Rachel Spencer-Reed, I am a resident of New Gloucester, and I am here today in opposition of the bills before the committee today, including LD 380. would repeal the current process by which a minor 16-18 years old consents to gender-affirming hormone therapy and follow-up care, including in situations where their parent is not supportive of their necessary medical care. I am deeply grateful to be raising my own teens in a state with strong protections for the human rights of transgender and LGBTQIA+ people, but if this bill passes it would cause significant and unnecessary harm to transgender young people in Maine.

I have personally known many transgender young people - both professionally working for youth services agencies and in my personal life - who have needed life-saving gender affirming medical care before they turned 18. There are already accepted WPATH medical guidelines for the safe treatment of minors ages 16-18 in use internationally, which are also utilized by Maine providers. I have seen trans young people experience significant, life-altering depression and self-harm including suicidality when they have not been able to access medical treatment. I have also seen how dramatically the health, self-confidence, and mental health of trans young people has improved once they have been able to access gender-affirming medical care. It is truly heart-warming to see a trans young person change over a period of months from being despondent, turned inward, and suicidally depressed before gender-affirming care to afterwards becoming an outgoing, healthy, young adult who carries themselves with more joy and confidence. Healthcare is a human right that all people deserve.

I believe we should be supporting health care providers, families, and teens to make their own thoughtful and well-informed decisions about initiating medical treatment for gender affirming care in similar ways as we do for their reproductive health and all other medical care. Ideally parents would be supportive and involved, but because this isn't always the case ALL 16-18 year olds need to be able to access life-saving and important medical care without parental involvement. Existing legislation already describes how these decisions can and should be made by the competent minor and their medical care team. Removing this process as LD 380 would do will jeopardize the lives of an already vulnerable population.

I have spent my career working with vulnerable and housing-insecure children, youth, and families. While many families are loving and welcoming to their LGBTQIA+ children, there are still many who reject their children or whose children feel they must stay closeted or risk being kicked out on the streets. According to Chapin Hall's national research, 1 in 30 youth ages 13-17 in the United States will experience at least one night of homelessness each year, and LGBTQIA+ youth have a 120% higher risk of reporting homelessness.

I believe that restricting access to medical care for a specific minority group is simply ethically and morally wrong -- and likely unconstitutional discrimination on the basis of sex and gender identity under Maine law.

Maine should not be in the business of legislating discrimination that can cause physical and mental harm and increase youth homelessness or suicide rates. This bill is creating a problem rather than fixing one.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. As a parent of teenagers, educator, youth advocate, and citizen, I strongly urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD 380 and the rest of the bills being considered today that

would increase discrimination in Maine's schools (LD 233; LD 868; LD 1002; LD 1134; LD 1704) or weaken human rights protections or access to care for trans and nonbinary people (LD 1337, LD 1432).

Thank you.