

Amber Hathaway
Orono
LD 380

Dr. Amber Hathaway
Orono, Maine
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Dr. Amber Hathaway, and I am a resident of Orono. I am providing testimony today in opposition to LD 380.

It is a well-documented fact that gender-affirming care is safe, effective, and saves lives. A 2022 study [1] found that trans youth benefited significantly from having access to puberty blockers and hormones. Trans youth with access to gender-affirming care had a 60% lower risk of moderate to severe depression and 73% lower odds of self harm or suicidal thoughts compared to trans youth without access to this care [1]. I myself have friends who are alive today due in large part to gender-affirming care. I am thankful that Maine law currently recognizes the importance of this necessary, life-saving medical care, but I am deeply concerned about the potential effects that LD 380 could have on 16- and 17-year-old Mainers in need of this care.

Major medical organizations including the AAP, AMA, and APA support the use of gender-affirming care for teens [2-4]. It is considered to be safe, and the potential side effects are generally outweighed by the significant benefits to overall well-being [5]. Yet despite the preponderance of evidence in support of gender-affirming care, there are parents of transgender youth who refuse to accept their children as they are and would deny them this essential healthcare. We cannot allow misguided parental notions to supersede the autonomy and mental and physical well-being of transgender youth.

The current law that allows some minors to access hormone treatments without parental consent is already very narrow in its scope. Minors 16 and older are only eligible if they have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria and if they are currently experiencing harm or will likely experience harm from being denied hormones, as determined by a healthcare professional. Additionally, the law ensures that minors seeking hormone treatments will be given all options and evaluated for their ability to consent to the care. Minors who are deemed mentally and physically competent to consent to healthcare should not be denied safe, effective medical care deemed beneficial by medical experts simply because they have unsupportive parents.

Gender-affirming hormone therapy is an essential and lifesaving healthcare treatment. While it would be wonderful if every child had parents who recognized and affirmed them as they are, that is not the current reality, and we need to prioritize the mental and physical well-being of trans and nonbinary youth.

Thank you for your consideration,
Amber Hathaway

[1]
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789423#google_vignette

[2]<https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/aap-voices/why-we-stand-up-for-transgender-children-and-teens/>

[3]<https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/ama-press-releases/ama-states-stop-interfering-health-care-transgender-children>

[4]<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2024/02/policy-supporting-transgender-nonbinary>

[5]<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11289353/#:~:text=2020;%20Rew%2C%20et%20al.,and%20welfare%20of%20trans%20adolescents.>