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My name is Whit Smith and I am a Maine constituent. I am also someone who cares deeply about my queer and trans community in Maine, and I feel lucky to be a part of this community.

Please consider the power you all hold to shape a future where our queer and trans youth want to grow older and build lives here. As a young person I could have easily been added to the statistic of trans youth that take their lives early. I feel very fortunate to have had three key teachers that saw me and my need for some emotional support. Those teachers saw an incredibly high achieving and also miserable student. I was able to play the role of a straight, cis girl, but I also knew something was deeply misaligned. Forcing myself into these boxes resulted in 20 years of deep emotional distress and eventually an inability to continue my academics in college.

I want the kids I know today to have a different trajectory. One where the acceptance of different people is welcomed, the acceptance of questions and figuring out where they fit is a possibility. Protecting trans people protects all of us, protects our bodily autonomy, protects our rights to evolve and push up against the harms of patriarchy. Enforcing gender norms on cis and trans people hurts everyone. Using our fears to legislate minority groups out of existence will begin to extend far and wide. I want to live in a state and a country with diversity, real diversity. I want to know that I will have the same protections under the law as my neighbors. And I want to be able to reassure the kids in my life that their future can be bright. Please oppose these bills designed to target youth and people who are trans, or appear trans to others. Thank you!