

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee. My name is Craig Cardamone and I am a resident of Winterport and I am writing to encourage you to vote in opposition to LD 380, An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services.

As a licensed marriage and family therapist with 12 years of experience serving people all across the state and specifically working with people in the transgender community I know the inevitable mental health suffering this bill will cause if it were to pass. Due to being bound by confidentiality I cannot speak about the individual experiences of my clients, but I can provide my understanding of what they go through. Additionally, I have written dozens of letters in support of various forms of gender affirming treatment. I have also worked with hundreds of trans people in various settings and in two states. Despite all of my clients being adults, they all remember their experiences as being trans children as well as their often excruciating journeys to realizing they were trans and then coming out. Some were able to receive gender affirming care as minors while others had to wait due to various circumstances. Before receiving gender affirming care, most report intense mental and physical distress, sometimes to the point of self-harming, becoming agoraphobic, or attempting suicide. Generally after receiving care, most of their mental distress greatly reduces. The thing that I notice most often is that access to care early along with a supportive home and community environment provide the best outcomes for a trans person's mental wellbeing. This isn't surprising as this is the case for everyone, as most people will say that having a loving family and accepting community usually makes them feel well. Ultimately having access to gender affirming care, no matter what stage of life a person is in, move trans people to feeling more accepted and more aligned with how they truly feel.

Where this bill comes into play is it removes the possibility of a child's mental and emotional distress being alleviated by accessing gender affirming care. Trans children already have a tougher time in school and in their communities due our society's anti-trans sentiments and oftentimes accessing gender affirming care is the difference between life and death. In states that passed similar bans, suicide rates amongst trans youth increase by up to 72%. It is well established that gender affirming care is essential for a trans person's mental and emotional wellbeing. Trans affirming care for minors has been in place for many years and has guidelines to inform providers like myself of what we can and cannot do. This bill feeds dangerous rhetoric about genital mutilation and regret that someone will make "the wrong, irreversible decision". I can say that this is something I have never heard or seen in my practice. Often when someone does decide to de-transition it is due to a desire to cope with anti-trans sentiments and the fear and danger these sentiments cultivate in our culture. Despite this bill targeting minors, we have seen other states in the country begin to explore policies that remove gender affirming care for adults. Maine would not be immune to this trend. When we protect the right of trans children to have access to the care they need we continue to protect the right of all trans people to seek care that's right for them. We also affirm that trans children have a right to exist.

Maine can continue to be a place where everyone in the trans community feels safe amidst a growing and dangerous anti-trans political environment. Trans children in particular need to see

that our state stands with them and will support them in receiving gender affirming care. Please vote out not to pass for LD 380. Thank you.