

Melissa McStay  
Portland  
LD 1002

I am writing as a concerned Mainer but also as a school social worker. I have worked to improve our district and state's suicide prevention measures. One of the most important interventions is to ensure that all students feel seen and heard and have a place for belonging.

Our transgender youth are disproportionately at risk of suicide in large part because they are often marginalized and made to feel they do not belong in our communities. Schools have a powerful influence on building welcoming spaces. This includes opportunities for students to participate as the person they are in all activities. It also includes being able to decide how they identify themselves and what name they would like to be called.

As schools, we should be using every proactive and positive tool we have to protect our students' wellbeing. We should not be enacting laws that put our students at further risk.