

Spoken testimony 5/8/2025 re: LD1337 and LD1432:

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. I thank you again for the opportunity to address you today. My name is **Sarah James. I live in Bath.** I am a parent, and I am non-binary. I am here in opposition to the bills before you.

I've shared some references in my testimony document, so I will let you read these to have some examples of the need for specified gender identity protections in the Maine Human Rights Act, and I will simply share a more personal response to the bills before you.

I don't know what way of moving through the world makes you feel joyous and full and real. But I know that it has taken me years to see in myself something, in my identity, that finally, finally feels like home.

Frankly, laws don't actually save us: our neighbors, our friends, our webs of community (churches, sports teams, nature clubs, knitting circles, etc) save us. But I can tell you that having gender identity explicitly spelled out in law tells me that our institutions see us and also believe that our existence has value, that we deserve to have safe places to live and shelter from our abusers; we deserve work that pays for groceries (even eggs!); and we deserve safety on the streets wherever we go. These things are not to say that we deserve to be *exempted* from the law, but rather that we be protected by it in the same way that all other Mainers are protected.

Even if all of those things have yet to exist for all of us, it means something to have it codified, to see ourselves directly in our representative democracy, to know that even when the rule of law fails some of us, we are acknowledged, we have options. I urge you to **continue** to recognize us all in our variety of identity and expression as full Mainers deserving of protection under the law, and protection in shelters by rejecting these bills for further consideration.

Responses to specific bills:

- [LD 1337](#): An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters
 - Exempting women's single sex shelters from public accommodations opens the door for exclusions of women for things other than gender identity. Women who are at their most vulnerable need to have safe landing places. In an effort to exclude trans women, there may be unintended consequences for many, many other women, including increased domestic violence deaths. Why kill service provision because of fear of an incredibly small minority?
 - Female athletes should be equally protected by Maine Human Rights laws for Mainers, regardless of the state of Title IX. I can only presume this to align with federal level chicanery to exclude trans women/girls from participating in their sports of choice as the women/girls they are. Nothing in science or practical numbers of athletes indicates this as a significant threat to athletic accomplishments or activities at educational institutions. Why are we legislating for such a non-issue? Why are we overburdening staff, coaches and administrators, and the Maine legal system with policies that create local conflict and barriers and fears more than they help young women, trans women, or any young people, participate equally in a sport.
- [LD 1432](#): An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act

- Please see references for some examples of the ways that transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people need a specified inclusion in the equal treatment under the law for all Mainers.

References:

Transgender people over four times more likely than cisgender people to be victims of violent crime, press release regarding the report, “Gender Identity Disparities in Criminal Victimization: National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017–2018” appearing in the *American Journal of Public Health* and is co-authored by Andrew R. Flores, Ph.D., Ilan Meyer, Ph.D., and Lynn L. Langton, Ph.D., and Jody L. Herman, Ph.D.

“Transgender people [nationally] are over four times more likely than cisgender people to experience violent victimization, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated or simple assault, according to a new study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. In addition, households with a transgender person had higher rates of property victimization than cisgender households.”

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/ncvs-trans-press-release/>

Summary of Maine respondents to the US Transgender Survey conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality in the summer of 2015. Report by Advocates for Trans Equality.

“Of respondents who visited a place of public accommodation where staff or employees thought or knew they were transgender, 29% experienced at least one type of mistreatment in the past year. This included 10% who were denied equal treatment or service, 24% who were verbally harassed, and 3% who were physically attacked because of being transgender.

Housing:

- 28% of respondents experienced some form of housing discrimination in the past year, such as being evicted from their home or denied a home or apartment because of being transgender.
- 36% have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.
- 13% experienced homelessness in the past year because of being transgender.”

<https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-MEStateReport.pdf>

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I had hoped to provide this in person, but due to the lateness of the hour for the first hearing and the need to work tomorrow, my spouse and I chose to leave for the night. I hope you will read the attached document in the spirit of live testimony.