

My name is Jed James. I am a 57-year-old transgender man. I am also a psychotherapist working primarily with transgender adults. I live in Bath, Maine.

In my earliest memories, I recognized myself as male. I began to assert my masculine identity as soon as I had words. I used every birthday wish, every wish on a falling star and many a prayer to ask to be made into a boy. I begged for masculine clothing, and I fought like a badger when my mother tried to wrangle me into a dress.

Notably, I was not a tomboy—a characterization that many anti-trans folks use to dismiss childhood trans masculinity--and I felt confused when adults tried to characterize me as such. I was not “rough and tumble.” I liked to play quietly with my stuffed animals. I was a soft, shy child who simply and unequivocally understood myself to be male.

In my early 30s I made a bid to transition after learning that such a thing could be done, but I was unable to find help. My PCP slammed his office door in my face after telling me that no one in his hospital system would help me. A therapist told me that I must be homophobic and sexist. Friends laughed at me. I feared losing my family. I struggled with not wanting to be associated with cruel, embarrassing stereotypes that I had internalized about transgender people.

It was in my late 30s that I finally accessed help with transitioning. It was at this point, after many years of isolation, confusion and instability that I finally began my life. I bought a house; I started down a career path; I made new friends; I got married to a wonderful and supportive human being.

In the years that I have worked with transgender clients in therapy, something I have never heard from a single person is regret that they did not postpone their transition. I have often witnessed their bittersweet feelings when they talk about kids who are able to transition much earlier in life, particularly before reaching puberty. They are happy for these kids, but they grieve their own losses—the loss of childhood that would have aligned with their gender identity, and the inability to forestall secondary sexual characteristics that now leave them uncomfortable in their bodies. I very much identify with this sense of loss, as I deeply grieve never having been a boy and not having experienced life as a young man. It galls me, frankly, that by the time I achieved a full beard, it was already gray.

In the past, I pointed out to my clients that their lives and mine were part of an arc of progress for transgender people. There were many transgender activists whose sacrifices paved the way to my own transition, just as the transitions of people in my generation opened doors for my 20-something clients. I told them that they could feel proud of making the world a more accepting and accessible place for the generation that came after theirs. That, I told them, should always be our aspiration as human beings.

We are now seeing such an astounding surge in anti-trans legislation that I can no longer offer that comfort to myself or to my clients. I have trans feminine clients who can no longer go on road trips due to the anti-trans bathroom bills being increasingly written into state laws. They fear layovers in airports where bathroom laws are in place, as there is nowhere safe to take care of a simple, private, human need. I have trans masculine clients

who, when traveling abroad, shave off their beards so that they will less obviously contradict the 'F' marker that they are forced to carry on their passports. I have clients who are moving out of this country altogether because this country feels increasingly unsafe.

It's hard to know exactly how many Mainers are transgender, but as of 2023, under 6,000 adults in the state identified as trans, and only 1.6% of youth. Nonetheless, our state is spending considerable time and money debating bills designed to reverse decades of progress for transgender youth and adults.

[LD 1337](#) Would keep trans women out of domestic violence shelters. There is no evidence that transgender women are a danger to their cisgender sisters. In fact, they are much more likely to be the victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault than is the general population. They need and deserve protection, not exclusion.

[LD 380](#) Would put up an additional roadblock for trans adolescents seeking gender-affirming care. My clients and I are living testimony to the fact that such care changes lives for the better. Early access to hormone blockers and other hormonal care can prevent changes that contribute to lifelong dysphoria, anxiety and depression. Doctors and therapists treating trans youth are measured and thoughtful in their approach. We should trust them, and not blanket laws, to guide young people in the choices that they make about their bodies.

[LD 1432](#) would remove gender identity from the state's human rights protections. I think of my clients, who are some of the sweetest, most creative, most introspective and thoughtful humans I have ever met. It's a privilege to know them in the intimate way that I do. They are harming no one, and neither am I.

It's incomprehensible to me that anyone would want to roll back a human rights provision already codified into law. Of all of the proposed laws in today's three sets of misguided bills, this one seems to me to be the most objectively and pointedly cruel.

As a very young child, I told my parents clearly, firmly and relentlessly that I was a boy. But people were not talking about transgender people in those days; they had other, less neutral words for us. My parents were not equipped to help me, and neither were my teachers, friends or pediatricians. Had it been otherwise, and had I been able to get help, my life would have taken an entirely different trajectory, with the first half of my life as purposeful and directed and full of connection as the latter half has been. It grieves me to know that there are people who would take us back 30, 40, 50 and more years—back to the days of repression and deferred identities and disjointed lives.

I urge you to vote against these anti-transgender measures. When you take away the basic human rights of a small, vulnerable population, when you infringe upon a child's right to seek help from trained, licensed, medical professionals, when you restrict vital, protective services to only women you deem fit, you chip away at our collective humanity, and, in doing so, you make the world less safe for us all.

Jed James  
Bath  
LD 1432

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and provide written testimony. Due to the lateness of the hour, we chose to leave and submit testimony this way. Please accept this in the spirit of spoken testimony.