

**TESTIMONY OF SARAH A. McDANIEL,
PRESIDENT OF PFLAG PORTLAND MAINE CHAPTER
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 1337 and 1432**

Judiciary Committee, Room 438, May 8, 2025 1:00 pm

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for holding a hearing on these important bills, all of which I urge you to oppose.

My name is Sarah A. McDaniel. I currently reside in New Gloucester, formerly of Gorham. In my career I am a land conservation attorney practicing at my own lawfirm in North Yarmouth. Most importantly for today's hearing, I am mother of a transgender son who now lives in Portland and am the President of PFLAG's Portland Maine Chapter.

WHO IS PFLAG?

When my son first came out to me a decade ago, the summer before he started at Gorham High School, I turned to PFLAG for education and support on this unanticipated parenting journey.

If you are not familiar with PFLAG, they are the country's oldest ally group, begun in 1972 when a mother marched in the first New York pride parade in support of her gay son – a monumental show of love. **That grew a movement of parents, friends and family of LGBTQ+ people working to protect their loved ones from discrimination.** Fifty years later, PFLAG is now a national nonprofit with staffed offices in DC that works across the country by a series of local volunteer-run chapters, currently numbering in the hundreds.

PFLAG Portland is currently Maine's only active chapter, with a focus on southern Maine. Other chapters have ebbed and flowed with volunteer capacity in Houlton and in Waterville but the greater Portland chapter has been steady and active in Maine since 1995. Since covid, our chapter's monthly support meetings have stayed on Zoom as we are better able to help families from all across the state, including those who cannot easily get into downtown Portland.

I've been on the board for about 7 years, president for the last 4. In this time, we have been able to **serve on the order of 400 Maine families**. A large proportion of these are families seeking to better understand and support their transgender loved ones, often youth.

In addition to our monthly peer support groups, we have been invited by faith leaders to speak at their churches and help them becoming more welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. We join panels on LGBTQ+ issues when invited by school groups. And we are a voice for parents when policies that may harm their children are moving through the legislature, like today.

One point that I hope you understand as you consider all the testimony you have heard today is that **parents of transgender youth are scared for the safety of their children**. This committee has heard the anti-doxxing bills, so you are aware of the real dangers Maine children face in this increasingly contentious political environment. The bravery and courage of the people who come today to testify in person, or who share their stories with you in writing should be applauded. Yet for everyone who speaks up, there are many more parents, teachers, friends, youth who also want these bills to fail, but are not able to share their identifying information to vocally oppose the bills out of fear of their families being targeted for violence.

PFLAG is here to speak for them.

The bills before you this afternoon LD 1337 and LD 1432 are additional attacks seeking to harm Maine's transgender community.

LD 1337 proposes two amendments to the Maine Human Rights Act. It begins by stripping away all state human rights protections for women in private emergency shelters, then it continues by expressly stating that federal Title IX protections afforded to "female athletes" are not affected by the Act's prohibition on discrimination in education.

The lawyer in me finds this bill to be too sloppily drafted to plainly state its intent. But in any event, its presumed intent – to keep transgender women out of women’s shelters and to restrict Maine’s human rights protections to match any narrower interpretation as may be given to the federal Title IX -- is a vast overreach for a nonexistent problem.

In contrast, LD 1432 is precisely drafted and its intent is plain: it removes all express mention of “gender identity” from the Maine Human Rights Act. This allows for transgender people to be discriminated against by their employers, by their schools, and in housing. This could arguably open the door to prohibiting trans girls from sports, with all the attendant harms you heard about this morning. And it goes further: transgender people who lose their jobs because their employer doesn’t like or understand trans people would have no recourse. Landlords could refuse to rent to transgender people and mortgage lenders could withhold loans from otherwise creditworthy transgender people.

Trans people are not a threat, and being transgender is not a choice. Transgender Mainers are productive members of society who deserve an equal opportunity to pursue life liberty and happiness, free from discrimination. Maine has been a leader in recognizing their human dignity, we should continue to lead the way forward, not turn back the clocks.

I request everyone on this Committee to vote NO on LD 1337, and 1432; these bills OUGHT NOT TO PASS. I am pleased to answer questions today or attend a workshop if additional information will be helpful.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah A. McDaniel

President, PFLAG Portland Maine Chapter