

Avery Friend
Portland
LD 380

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Avery Friend, I'm a Portland resident, and I'm here with the organization MaineTransNet. I'm here today to voice our strenuous opposition to LD 380.

I've lived with chronic illness since I was a teenager, and am all too familiar with the painful, complicated, and often harmful realities of the healthcare system. My experiences with health care providers since moving to Maine after 25 years in Louisiana have provided a remarkable contrast, and practitioners providing gender affirming care are some of the most

In a perfect world, parents and guardians would approach their children's care with the same open-mindedness and be guided by their children's experiences, evidence-based medical practices endorsed by all major medical organizations, and with the support and supervision of expert medical practitioners. We know that the quality of gender-affirming care in Maine is astounding, safe, and administered at high degrees of scrutiny. Doctors and practitioners that operate collaboratively with patients, respect lived experiences, and approach health care as a partnership can have an effect on trans youth that is incalculably positive, life changing, and life saving.

The tragic reality is that we also know that not all parents and guardians support appropriate medical treatment for their children, as evidenced by everything from measles outbreaks to refusal to allow access to age-appropriate sex education and reproductive health care. We know that children who grow up in non-affirming homes and communities, without access to gender affirming care, face catastrophic rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidality. We know that we live in a world where up to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+, despite making up only around 10% of the population. We know that this is partly because some parents throw their kids out upon learning they're queer or trans. I know these people. I grew up in a conservative Christian community in the Deep South. I know what happened to some of those people. I know where one of them is buried.

16 and 17 year olds, in partnerships with doctors and medical experts, should not be reliant on parents that may be actively harming them to receive safe and effective care. I was lucky, as a teenager dealing with a complicated illness with no easy treatment, to have supportive parents who helped advocate for me and my own care. Even if I didn't, however, I'd have deserved the access to and quality of care that I needed. When it comes to gender-affirming care for teenagers, it's even more frustrating to know that we KNOW how to effectively care for trans teenagers, and access to that care should not be contingent on misinformed or even actively harmful or abusive guardians when all relevant experts have established a practice of the care that is in the field individual's best interest.

I want to believe that people here believe in suicide prevention for all children. For trans kids, being able to find an adult that will respect their identity is a critical lifeline. Until every parent is ready to do that for their child, we owe it to trans kids to provide a pathway to an adult who can offer them safety, understanding, and evidence-based care.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.