



Testimony in Support of
L.D. 2108, An Act to Establish the Suicide Mortality Review Panel
By Heide Lester on behalf of EqualityMaine

February 4, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Heide Lester, I use they/them pronouns, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support L.D. 2108 and its aim to convene a Suicide Mortality Review Panel, with the recommendation of adding sexual orientation and gender identity data collection to further the understanding of risk factors and enhance suicide prevention efforts in our state.

Numerous studies demonstrate that LGBTQ+ people, particularly transgender individuals and young people, face significantly higher rates of suicidal thoughts and attempts. In 2024, 38% of LGBTQ+ young people in Maine seriously considered suicide, including 42% of transgender and nonbinary young people, and 13% of LGBTQ+ young people in Maine attempted suicide, including 18% of transgender and nonbinary young people.¹ It is important to note that being LGBTQ+ does not inherently put a person at higher risk for suicide, but rather it is the increased likelihood of rejection, chronic stress, abuse, victimization, and bullying that increases the risk. Further, although studies have reported a high rate of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among LGBTQ+ people, that does not automatically correlate to a high rate of suicides. The fact is that because most investigators do not collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity, no one knows how many LGBTQ+ people die by suicide each year in Maine.

We do know that Maine's suicide rate is consistently higher than the national average and has increased significantly over the past 20 years. We know that in our state there are six suicides for every one homicide.² And we know that by learning from loss we will be better positioned to save lives. We urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on L.D. 2108. Collecting data will help us to better understand suicide in our state, which in turn will foster better prevention methods in the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ "2024 Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People in Maine." *The Trevor Project*, 2025, thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2024-50-State-Report-Maine.pdf.

² "Suicide | Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention." *Maine.gov*, 2025, maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/data-reports/substance-use-and-behavioral-health/suicide.