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My name is Taylor West, and I am from Winslow, Maine. I am writing to urge a critical re-evaluation of LD 2162. While this bill is framed as a protection against predatory AI, it creates a dangerous regulatory "middle ground" for a technology that we are fundamentally unequipped to police.

I have watched this legislative body struggle to catch up with the digital world. We have yet to pass a baseline set of laws that truly protect Maine consumers from the predatory nature of the standard internet. To move forward with a bill that "regulates" human-like AI—while simultaneously carving out exemptions for "prescribed" therapy bots—is to build a second floor on a house that has no foundation.

We need only look at the current crisis on platforms like Roblox to see why this approach is flawed. Despite "safety standards," human predators continue to use social interfaces to groom and sex traffic minors at an industrial scale. If our existing laws cannot stop a human predator on a gaming site from exploiting a child, how can we possibly expect to regulate an algorithm designed specifically to simulate human emotion?

By allowing an exemption for "therapy chatbots," we are giving a legislative green light to the very "fake empathy" that makes AI such a potent tool for grooming and manipulation. We are essentially betting that a "prescribing professional" can act as a shield against a technology that operates at a speed and scale no human can monitor. We are repeating the exact mistakes of the early internet era: we are prioritizing "innovation" and "administrative efficiency" in mental health over the physical and digital safety of our children.

I support the private right of action in this bill; tech companies must be held liable for the harm their products cause. However, a right to sue after the damage is done is a poor substitute for preventing the harm in the first place.

Vulnerable children do not need an algorithm for emotional care prescribed by a doctor; they need the human-led behavioral health workforce. They deserve professionals supported by living wages and present in our communities. We must finish the job of securing the baseline internet before we invite a new, even more invasive technology into the lives of Maine's children.

I urge the committee to reject this framework as premature and insufficient.