

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



April 12, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the health and human services committee,

My name is Jan Collins, I am assistant director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC). I am here to support LD 1040 An Act to Require Reimbursement for Gender-affirming Care for MaineCare Members.

In my position with MPAC, I regularly receive messages from trans individuals in Maine's prison system. Prison is a traumatic experience for anyone, but it is especially so for anyone who is transgender. The bullying and harassment that is a normal part of a trans individual's life on the outside is magnified on the inside. It may come from staff and it may come from other residents. Inside prisons and jails, there is no where to go, no way to escape from the attacks and threats of personal harm.

Messages from trans individuals often include a confession of deep despondency and thoughts of self harm. They may be isolated from the rest of the prison with little interaction with the rest of the population for "their own protection". But, this isolation comes with its own risks. As we have all learned first hand from our Covid isolation, being alone exacerbates mental health diagnoses and leads to depression even in healthy people. For those who are already struggling, it can be life threatening.

I am also a retired high school science teacher. As such I have known for decades that the answer to gender identity was not simply about 'X' and 'Y' chromosomes as most of us learned in middle school. Identity is regulated by genes on a number of different chromosomes. According to a 2020 article in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences, "growing

evidence underlines the primary role of biological factors on psychosexual development”.

In other words, that feeling transgender individuals experience that the body they inhabit does not reflect who they are inside, is a biologically based medical condition over which they have no control. As such it deserves a medical solution.

Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition wholeheartedly supports LD 1040 and asks that you give it your unanimous support. Our trans friends and neighbors have suffered way too long.

Sincerely,
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Ristori J, Cocchetti C, Romani A, Mazzoli F, Vignozzi L, Maggi M, Fisher AD. Brain Sex Differences Related to Gender Identity Development: Genes or Hormones? *Int J Mol Sci.* 2020 Mar 19;21(6):2123. doi: 10.3390/ijms21062123. PMID: 32204531; PMCID: PMC7139786.