



Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
1735 Testimony of EqualityMaine  
**LD - An Act to Safeguard Gender-affirming Health Care**

May 12, 2023

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee my name is Gia Drew, and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984 I am here today to testify in support of LD 1735 - An Act to Safeguard Gender-affirming Health Care We thank Representative Osher's leadership in bringing this bill forward

It's fitting that Maine's state motto is Dirigo, which means "I lead," as Maine has been and continues to be a leader nationwide in LGBTQ+ rights From electing LGBTQ+ candidates to serve in public office, to building strong non discrimination laws, passing marriage equality, and providing gender-affirming care to Mainers, we continually work with a wide group of communities and across generations, to make Maine a more inclusive and welcoming place to live, work, and visit

Here in Maine people who need gender affirming care and meet the medical and mental health expectations can get that care And in accordance with Maine Law, health insurers in Maine may not prohibit or exclude gender-affirming care as part of the covered services Additionally, MaineCare, Maine's Medicaid program, must also cover gender affirming care, and has been doing so for several years You've already heard today from transgender people like me, parents of transgender youth, and providers who offer this type of care, that this healthcare is life affirming, and often life saving LGBTQ+ people live in every community in every state All kids deserve access to the health care they need and that should not depend on the state that you live in And Maine's medical providers deserve the right to provide best-practice medical care without fear of recrimination or threat of legal consequences

This year we've seen a horrifying, record number of political attacks on the LGBTQ+ community, and especially on transgender people - with more than 700 anti-LGBTQ+

bills introduced across the nation just this year. Tragically, eighteen states have enacted laws or policies that ban gender-affirming health care for transgender youth, with fifteen of those states enacting those laws this year.<sup>1</sup> While Federal courts have issued a few rulings, blocking bans from taking effect in three states, and legal challenges in several other states are pending, the outcome of these and their timelines are uncertain, leaving transgender youth and their families in limbo. And, in three states, administering gender-affirming health care to a minor is a felony crime, punishable by up to a decade in prison. That has meant that families have had to look to other states for care options and refuge.

Offering hope and the opportunity to access gender affirming care, then taking that care away from vulnerable young trans people, is an act of violence towards our community. To all those families across the United States that are afraid and wondering where they can go for help, I hope that Maine will **continue to lead** by sending the message: Maine sees you, we love you, and you are welcome here.

We urge you to **vote ought to pass on LD 1735**

Thank You

Gia Drew

(she/her)

Executive Director, EqualityMaine

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lgbtmap.medium.com/lgbtq-equality-maps-updates-may-2023-4ee004babb4c>