

Good Afternoon, my name is **Alicia Lawson**. I'm a mother of 5 and a Winthrop resident here to testify in strong opposition to the bill **LD-1735**

I will not sugar coat what it was like to raise a questioning child with autism spectrum disorder. It was hell at times for all of us - her four younger siblings, my husband, myself, our marriage

There were times where my husband and I took shifts doing suicide watch outside her bedroom door which lead to a crisis stay at the height of the Covid pandemic

Even when my daughter's pediatrician pushed to have us sign a referral to the gender clinic, I clung to the hope I found in her psychiatrist's words, "children with ASD see gender as less black and white, but almost always grow out of it."

I knew in my heart that if we could just get her over this hump, she would be okay. And I'm here to tell you, I was right

Puberty is hard. Body changes are uncomfortable. I remember feeling self-conscious about my own growing breasts as a kid. It was humiliating at times, especially around boys. But these changes are normal and necessary. Unfortunately these normal changes have become pathologized into "something is wrong with you"

I stand here to tell you, with my education and experience with working at an inpatient psychiatric hospital with children, adolescents, and young adults, what kids need today is consistency, stability, attention, love and someone to protect them!

Gender affirmation care does none of that

My intelligent, once questioning, thoughtful 18 year old daughter just completed her first year of college at the University of Maine in Orono, studying climate sciences, and made the Dean's List all semesters. She is a thriving, beautiful, intact female and I couldn't be more proud of how much she has overcome

She didn't need gender affirming care. She needed steady and strong parents to protect her

In a text message I'll never forget, my daughter wrote, "I think you were right, by the way, I'm not transgender, I'm a woman"

I gave my daughter the gift of time. Children need to be kids, let them be kids. Do not allow bills, that support the medical mutilation of children, to pass. If this passes, parents like me, who choose to wait, who choose to protect, could lose our rights to be the authority over our children. Do not pass this LD-1735. It is not good for families. It is not good for kids. It is not good for Maine.