



MaineTransNet

ACCESSIBILITY. INCLUSIVITY. COMMUNITY.

March 5, 2024

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and esteemed members of the Joint standing committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services my name is Bre Danvers-Kidman, I use they/them pronouns, and I am the executive director of MaineTransNet.

On behalf of MaineTransNet, I am speaking with strong support for LD 227, "An Act Regarding Health Care in the State" aimed at safeguarding medical providers who operate in the State of Maine. We believe this proposal is crucial in ensuring that vital services remain accessible to those who need them most.

Gender-affirming care and reproductive healthcare are fundamental aspects of medical practice, essential for the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of countless individuals. For example: anyone who had a doctor involved in their gestation or birth has benefited from reproductive healthcare.

Despite the critical importance of these services, medical providers who offer them often face unjustified legal challenges, lawsuits and even criminalization in some states. The recent proliferation of politically motivated state laws penalizing practitioners not only threatens medical providers' professional livelihoods but also undermines the ability of ALL communities to access necessary medical care.

The implementation of a "shield bill" would provide much-needed protection to medical professionals who are simply doing their jobs by providing healthcare they are legally allowed to provide in this state. I want to be clear: the potential impact of failing to shield providers is not limited to practitioners who are specifically devoted to gender affirming care or reproductive healthcare. Primary care physicians, pediatricians, and providers across a wide variety of specializations participate in the provision of this essential care, and are at risk of falling victim to other states' laws without this vital protection from the state of Maine.

By shielding them from unjust legal repercussions, this legislation would empower healthcare providers to fulfill their ethical duty to prioritize patient well-being over fear of retaliation or litigation. It would reinforce the principles of patient autonomy, confidentiality, and non-discrimination, ensuring that people in Maine have the right to access healthcare services without facing unnecessary political barriers enacted by other states' legislatures.

Mainers need access to more healthcare providers – not fewer. Passing this legislation and “shielding” providers from politically (not medically) motivated litigation ensures that medical providers have the ability to focus on the care of their patients.

This proposal clarifies that Maine healthcare providers should not face unwarranted discipline; loss of clinical privileges; adverse insurance actions; or criminalization for providing legally-protected health care consistent with evidence-based best practices.

By enacting this legislation, we declare that the Maine Legislature is not content to allow politicians from other states to interfere with Maine providers' ability to care for their patients.

This proposal also affirms the rights and dignity of transgender and non-binary people. Trans people face numerous significant barriers in accessing quality healthcare, but to be clear: the types of care at issue here are already legal in Maine. By enacting this legislation, we send a clear message that everyone deserves access to respectful, evidence-based, and non-discriminatory healthcare services.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 227 and continue to demonstrate this committee's dedication to upholding the principles of fairness, equity, and justice in healthcare. This proposal is bigger than politics; we are facing a crucial moment to protect Maine's ability to set and uphold its own healthcare policy. By protecting medical providers who offer gender-affirming healthcare and reproductive healthcare services, we can ensure that all individuals seeking care from Maine providers have access to the evidence-based healthcare they need.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Bre Danvers-Kidman, Esq.
(They/Them)
Executive Director, MaineTransNet