

Good afternoon, chairpersons Bailey and Perry, and all members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services committee. My name is Josie Phillips, and I am testifying today as a resident of Auburn in favor of LD 227.

An important piece of context about me is that I'm transgender, in that I was born male and raised to be a man, but I now live as a woman. Gender affirming care is why I'm able to stand here before you today. Before transitioning, I was miserable. I had been experiencing depression since childhood, and my dysphoria—my sense of discomfort and disconnect from my body—was steadily increasing with each passing year. Despite many attempts to suppress or deny it, I realized that I needed to transition. Luckily, I was able to receive gender affirming care through my university's clinic. I was finally able to feel comfortable in my own skin and in my interactions with other people. I was finally able to begin building a life worth living for myself, and in doing so, I have known joy that I never could have dreamed was possible.

This joy, this inner peace, is what state legislatures across the country are trying to strip transgender people of. This is what states are trying to criminalize parents for providing to their children, and doctors for providing to their patients, despite these bans being opposed by an overwhelming majority of medical associations.¹ Politicians and activists in these states are attempting to deny transgender people our right to live. They are attempting to investigate our parents under fabricated claims of child abuse and remove children from loving homes.² They are calling us demons and filth.^{3 4} They are trying to brand us as pedophiles.⁵ They are even, in some cases, outright calling for our elimination.⁶ These politicians are grotesquely capitalizing on their constituents' fear of what they do not understand for their own political gain,⁷ and in doing so, they are creating an atmosphere of terror for some of their states' most vulnerable residents.

Elected officials in other states are also trying to extend this hostile environment beyond their states' borders, which is what makes LD 227 necessary. Within the past year, the Texas Attorney General has requested information on transgender patients from clinics in both Washington state and Georgia.⁸ Last year, nineteen Attorneys General signed a letter protesting a federal rule

¹ GLAAD, "Medical Association Statements Supporting Trans Youth Healthcare and Against Discriminatory Bills."

<https://www.glaad.org/blog/medical-association-statements-supporting-trans-youth-healthcare-and-against-discriminatory>

² Texas Tribune, "Texas' child welfare agency blocked from investigating many more parents of trans teens." <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/09/16/texas-trans-teens-investigation-child-abuse/>

³ Politico, "Florida Republican apologizes after calling transgender people 'mutants'."

<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/04/10/florida-republican-apology-transgender-comments-00091315>

⁴ KOCO News, "State senator 'stands by' beliefs after calling LGBTQ+ Oklahomans 'filth'." February, 2024. <https://www.koco.com/article/oklahoma-state-senator-tom-wood-lgbtq-filth-comments/46978502>

⁵ NPR, "Accusations of 'grooming' are the latest political attack — with homophobic origins."

<https://www.npr.org/2022/05/11/1096623939/accusations-grooming-political-attack-homophobic-origins>

⁶ The Federalist, "Michael Knowles Is Right. Transgenderism Needs To Be Eradicated."

<https://thefederalist.com/2023/03/06/michael-knowles-is-right-transgenderism-needs-to-be-eradicated/>

⁷ NY Times, "How a Campaign Against Transgender Rights Mobilized Conservatives."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/16/us/politics/transgender-conservative-campaign.html>

⁸ Texas Public Radio, "Texas attorney general requests transgender youths' patient records from Georgia clinic." January, 2024.

<https://www.tpr.org/government-politics/2024-01-26/texas-attorney-general-requests-transgender-youths-patient-records-from-georgia-clinic>

strengthening the privacy of people who receive abortions from out-of-state investigations.⁹ LD 227 is not dealing with hypotheticals; it is preparing for a situation that has already come about in multiple states.

It's worth noting that this political hostility bleeds into the social environment, as well. Nationally, armed militias, including self-described Christian Fascists,¹⁰ have been disrupting Pride celebrations and other community events.¹¹ In Tulsa, where I lived for a year, a donut shop that hosted a drag event was repeatedly vandalized, the second time by throwing a molotov cocktail through their front window.¹² In June 2023 alone, there were 145 documented incidents of extremist hate, ranging from targeted harassment, to vandalism, to assaults and murder.¹³ There was a mass shooting in a queer club in Colorado.¹⁴ Just this month, a nonbinary high school student in Oklahoma died the day after they were violently bullied.¹⁵

All of this makes me feel unshakably afraid, for my future in this country and for the lives of my friends in states trying to criminalize care. LD 227 would extend shelter to people currently living under threat of these attempts at fear mongering and elimination. The bill would protect Maine doctors who provide gender affirming care and abortions and make Maine a safe harbor for the parents of transgender children, parents who are just trying to provide their children the medical care they need to survive. Because of this, I implore you to pass LD 227.

⁹ Tennessee Lookout, "Tennessee AG asserts right to out-of-state abortion, transgender care medical records." July, 2023.

<https://tennesseelookout.com/2023/07/18/tennessee-ag-asserts-right-to-out-of-state-abortion-transgender-care-medical-records/>

¹⁰ Pink News, "Far-right 'Christian fascists' launch chilling, hateful attack on family-friendly drag show." <https://www.thepinknews.com/2022/06/08/christian-fascists-drag-show-texas/>

¹¹ NPR, "31 members of the white nationalist Patriot Front arrested near an Idaho Pride event." <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/11/1104405804/patriot-front-white-supremacist-arrested-near-idaho-pride>

¹² The Washington Post, "Doughnut shop hit with a molotov cocktail after drag-queen art show." <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/11/04/donut-hole-molotov-cocktail-drag/>

¹³ GLAAD, "Anti-LGBTQ Hate & Extremism Spike During Pride 2023." July, 2023. <https://glaad.org/anti-lgbtq-hate-and-extremism-spike-during-pride-2023/>

¹⁴ ABC News, "Police: Gunman kills 5 at gay club, is subdued by patrons." <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/police-dead-18-injured-colorado-nightclub-shooting-93659717>

¹⁵ NBC News, "Fight hasn't been ruled out as cause of Nex Benedict's death, police say." <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/fight-hasnt-ruled-cause-nex-benedicts-death-police-say-rcna-140780>