

Good Morning Chairpersons Carney and Kuhn, and the rest of you who serve on the Judiciary committee. Thank you for your service to the state of Maine.

My name is Sara Bartlett, and I am here to speak to LD #537 "An act to prohibit the doxing of a minor and to authorize a related civil action." I am testifying on behalf of Multi-faith Justice Maine, a statewide movement that includes people from across the spectrum of faith who work together to create a more just and loving society. I also come to you as a constituent of Representative Laurel Libby, an ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ serving a church in Norway, and a 1990 graduate of Greely High School. I am a former licensed social worker for the state of Maine, including time as a Maine state child protective worker for both York and Cumberland Counties. I also come to you as a proud Mom of a queer person who was raised to expect respect for their being exactly who they are... a beloved child of God.

I am here to express my support for this bill. From my experience as a social worker, minister, and Mom, I have seen first-hand the importance of a caring community who helps youth become resilient.

Yes, resilient – a term meaning a way for a human being to overcome the challenges which face them so they may become, or remain, productive and meaningful members of society. When it comes to resiliency in youth in children. I have repeatedly seen how one caring adult can make such a difference in the life of a child and/or youth. A caring adult who expresses appreciation for the child, who listens, who cares, who protects.

Doxing a teenager is the opposite of being a caring adult who creates resiliency in our youth and children. Doxxing causes great harm. With that, I offer this quote from Max Sheridan, VPN and Identity theft protection expert from his August 2024 article "Doxxing statistics in 2024" "the most common outcomes for victims of doxing are financial losses, mental health impacts, damage to reputation and physical safety risks. Victims expressed feeling violated to the point where one study participant was hospitalized due to the mental health impacts of being doxed." When we combine research such as this with the knowledge that the brains of minors have not fully developed, I cannot discern why any adult would think it appropriate to post photos of any child under the age of 18. It is especially upsetting when that adult then continues to stand by the harm they have caused, including going on national television to promote themselves, and their political career.

I support this bill, and any others which holds accountable adults who seek to use minors for political points, especially when politicians do not seem to be able to accept their own responsibility for harm they have caused. As a Christian I am reminded of the scripture Ephesians 4:15 "speak the truth in love". To do this means we hold another person accountable so they may grow in love and create a better society for our minor children. As a result, we create resilient children who in turn make our community better.

Thank you for your time.

Rev. Sara Bartlett, M.Div.

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