

Angela Gilbert  
Lewiston, Maine  
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Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Judiciary, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my views on LD 260. My name is Angela Gilbert (my pronouns are she/her), and I'm a resident of Lewiston, and I am here today speaking as a Maine public school teacher. I want to share with you why I support LD 260.

I'm here because I want you to understand that Maine students are paying attention. As teachers, we always work hard to help students understand the importance of being themselves, of ignoring the norm of what is going on around them and be true to who they are. We will never be able to get this lesson across to our students if the state government doesn't stand up and send that message loud and clear.

Just a couple of weeks ago, after working with a student through some tricky ADHD moments in class, she looked up at me and asked, "Will I even be allowed to have ADHD anymore?" I heard another student say to a group of friends, "Make sure you call me they/them while it's still legal." As an educator, as someone who tries hard every day to help students understand how important it is that they stay true to themselves, these moments are heartbreaking, and they demonstrate how students are reacting to what they are seeing in the world around them.

They are facing legislation that is actively trying to silence who they are, telling them that they are not guaranteed the support that they need.

If Maine stands up and says in a loud, clear voice, "Yes, you will be accepted. You will be protected. No matter what religion you follow or what country your family was born in, no matter what disabilities you have, no matter your gender, Maine validates you," students will

hear it. It will matter to them. And students can understand that they can celebrate Eid, they can have access to accommodations that their disability requires, they can go to school dances with who they want to dance with, students are free to express their gender, and their state will not allow them to face discrimination for it.

I've taught over a thousand students in my career so far, all completely different from each other. Each and every one of them has the right to grow up into a world where they have equal rights as part of the Constitution of their state.

They feel their rights are on shaky ground right now, and this Committee has the ability to help stabilize the ground we all stand upon. We teachers will continue empowering students to be true to and confident in their identity. I ask that you help ensure that these lessons we teach hold true.

As you carefully consider LD 260, I ask that you think about what world our students are entering. I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective as a teacher. I urge you to pass LD 260. Thank you.