

Bonny Rodden
Falmouth, Maine
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Honorable and very powerful members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Bonny Rodden and I live in Falmouth. I am a parent like most of you. What's different about you and me is that, with your VOTE, you have the power to devastate lives. There's no question that all of us here love our children and want to protect them, but these bills are not really about that. They're about intolerance of people who are different – people who just want to be left alone to be their true selves.

That's why I'm surprised that loving parents are willing to let someone check inside their daughter's underwear to ascertain whether she is transgender and therefore not allowed to play girls' sports. Is their fear so great of the athletic prowess of transgender girls, that they're willing to subject their daughter to that? That's what school staff will need to do if this bill becomes law.

I know fear. I'm afraid every time my 26-year-old daughter walks out the door. Will someone beat her up just because she looks like a man but is wearing a dress? Will she die by the hands of someone intolerant of trans people, the way Charlie Howard died in Bangor 41 years ago when he was thrown off a bridge just because he was gay?

I know courage. Can you imagine what it's like for a transgender student to walk through the halls between class and hear muffled snickers? Is there anyone braver than the trans athlete who was outed on social media by one of your fellow legislators, someone we're supposed to respect? Imagine the slurs and hate mail she's getting because of that.

I hope Republican and Democrats in the Legislature have one iota of the courage these students have and will vote these bills down when they come to the floor.

I know love. I see it in parents who are sharing their painful stories here today. I see it in parents who choose not to be here or submit written testimony. Because their names would be in the public record, they're afraid they could harm the very children they're trying to protect. I see love at the Episcopal Church of Saint Mary's in Falmouth where I worship. My Christian denomination welcomes all people. We don't exclude someone just because they're trans or they're gay.

Please vote against all of these bills. If they pass, they will not only encourage intolerance of people who are different from ourselves, they will put intolerance into law.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.