

Hello. My name is Felix Markosian. I am from Ellsworth Maine and I am a senior at Ellsworth High School. Thank you for allowing me to have the opportunity to speak in front of you today. But to be frank, I wish I did not have to.

I would like to share with you something that my friend said to me on Tuesday when they found out about these bills. They messaged me:

"I don't even know. I don't know what I would do if it gets passed I genuinely don't know. I'm trying so hard to stay optimistic and not be doom and gloom but I genuinely don't think I'd be able to live like that

with everyone calling me by a name that isn't mine.

I just can't see it."

The fact that they, a 16 year old child, have to think about their life in a way, that no child their age should, because they are trans is devastating to hear. And they are not the only one. We are talking about kids who are trying to figure out who they are and how to express themselves in a safe place. When trans kids have to worry about their right to exist in public, it sends them into panic and crisis. The fact that this is a debate when my friends at home are fearing for their rights to seemingly small dignities - such as their right to be called their name in school - is unreal to me.

This legislation should not have to spend its time focusing on "issues" that are just simple human rights. And covering this blatant attack with excuse that you are trying to "protect the children" is honestly laughable. If you really want to protect the children, we should be here talking about funding and programs for foster care to get at risk kids in a safe place. We could be talking about providing rehabilitation programs and services for those going through addiction and helping them get the care they need. We could address the threat of gun violence that people all across state and country face by passing stricter gun laws.

I hope that what I have said here today has made you think and reflect about what it really means to protect children, and how they affect the lives of trans kids all over Maine. For the sake of my friends, I urge you to please vote "Ought not to Pass". Thank you. .