

Senator Carley, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Judiciary,

I extend my gratitude for the opportunity to address the Committee this morning. My name is Ashley Smith. I reside in Belgrade and I am here today in opposition of LD 1002, **An Act To Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate.**

I live in a rural part of Maine and am from an even more rural part of Pennsylvania. I cannot speak firsthand on what it means to personally transition. However, I had the opportunity to provide support to a loved who has. My thoughts on this matter could have easily been influenced based on the propaganda solely, let alone the influx of misinformation being spread via social media, entertainment and politicians. So, I took it upon myself to do a substantial amount of research to help not only educate myself, but those around me.

Studies conducted by the Transition Project have shown that the supportive involvement of parents and family is associated with better mental and physical health outcomes. Allowing social affirmation, which is a reversal of intervention in which kids are able to express either gender, or living in their gender identity by adapting new haircuts, clothing style, pronouns and names had a profoundly positive effect for young people under study.

Children and adolescents are shown to thrive when they are allowed to transition. The children who are not able to socially affirm their identity are shown more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts than those who are have supportive environments. The Trevor Project's National Survey on the LG.BTQ Youth of Color also indicated "Affirming trans gender and nonbinary youth by supporting their pronouns and preferred names were associated with lower rates of attempting suicide."

Remarkable. None of these studies informed us of the real threat to our youth; denying and rejecting a child's self-knowledge is a far greater intervention in that child's life, requiring a greater burden of clinical proof, than simply asking each child assert and affirm their own identity. The more people who use a person's chosen name, the more risk for their suicidal behavior dropped."

I would like to include this testimonial by stating that the implementation of this bill, the document would quite literally do the opposite in which it is titled. People claiming it is an act that would protect children, the diligent research I've conducted on this matter provides real, factual evidence that it would in fact do just the opposite. When you actively tell a child not to come to support them and deny their authenticity, not only is it harmful in that moment, it will have major consequences later. I want the children in our community to feel not only seen and heard, but safe and nurtured. More importantly, I want to these children to have a better probability of becoming adults. I want these children to live.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. Please vote "Ought NOT to pass on LD 1002". Thank you!"