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Cornish, Maine
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LD 1432: An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act

Greetings, "*Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee.* Thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is t love smith, (they/them), I live in Cornish. I am here in solidarity with all willing to stand between Maine kids and the recent incarnation of bullies. I am here in opposition and disgust of the bills before the committee today.

What kind of world are we returning to when we consider erasing kids from Human Rights Protections in Maine? I remember that world well because I grew up in it in the 80s & 90s, right here in Maine and in 2002, when gender identity and sexual orientation were added as protected classes under the Maine Civil Rights Act, I was a student and campus organizer for the Maine Won't Discriminate Campaign at USM, where I now attend graduate school.

The MWD Act was the first in the country to include legal language to protect me, my family and my community from the harms of ignorant sexuality and gender discrimination. Elbow-to-elbow with my peers of 18-35 year olds, we faced seething, pathetic hordes of hateful members of the Christian Civil League, with their signs spewing, *God Hates You & You're going to hell, sinner!!*"

It's written in the bill. An act to **REMOVE CONSIDERATION** of Gender Identity? It's intention is for the allowance of inconsiderate gender-based behavior. What I think the authors of this bill fail to admit is how genderphobia injures everyone in community with a gender outside of whatever is popular.

I grew up in Burlington, Maine, raised by MAGA women for the pleasure of MAGA men. I am the only one in my family to serve in the military and that is important to note. The army discharged me when I came out as a lesbian. In the military, not only was I not allowed to admit who I loved, I was also discouraged from expressing my gender. I wasn't allowed to cut my hair short or to wear military uniforms that didn't hug and pronounce my feminine features. There were jobs I wasn't qualified for in the military simply because of my assigned gender and there were separate PT test qualifications for men and women.

Due to my assigned gender, I faced regular harassment, assault based on the definitions assigned to my body by society and the lack of protections. This isn't exclusive to queer bodies assigned female at birth. Strict definitions of gender make all of us vulnerable. We know this, because we have already lived that reality.

Now is the time to double down on protections for all Mainers assigned a gender at birth and our right to express our gender with autonomy. We ought to be increasing protections not revoking them.

Thank you.