

Women and girls in Maine face many challenges and threats to their safety every day. It should be a priority of this legislative body to protect them from harm and seek solutions to their real world problems.

As someone with a little sister, who is currently pregnant, and a mother and grandmother who raised me to look out for my family, I understand all too well why it's important to protect girls and women, as well as all groups who are vulnerable to discrimination.

I was also raised to rely on facts when making informed decisions and backing up my convictions. I would like to share some facts about women and girls in Maine with this committee.

Each year, the Department of Health and Human Service in partnership with the Maine Department of Education conducts the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey for middle school and high school students. In 2023 at the time of the survey, they found that 1 in 4 girls seriously consider suicide within the last 30 days, 1 in 10 actually attempted suicide, and 3 in 10 reported self-harm such as cutting or burning themselves intentionally.

In another Maine-based survey, about 20% of girls reported (the operative word being "reported") having been forced to have sexual contact in some type of way in their lifetime. And national statistics are clear: 8 in 10 rapes are committed by someone known to the survivor, like a family member.

The threats in Maine to women and girls are real. But the place where you will find these threats are not where Republicans on committee would like you to think. The threat is not from young transgender people wanting to play sports who are at an even higher risk of discrimination and harm, or any transgender person looking to go to the bathroom or try on a shirt at a Reny's, for example.

The threats are found in their homes, in church basements, and in seemingly innocent attention from family friends. The threats are often at the hands of men who hold power over them, such as politicians.

Out the more than 50 bills and sentiments sponsored or co-sponsored by each of the members who have proposed anti-trans bills, none of them seek to find solutions to these real world problems. Instead, they've chosen to hop on the national bandwagon, in spite of the needs at home, to showboat on a nonissue, at the expense of some of the most vulnerable and underrepresented people in our state. That's just plain cruel. In good faith, I cannot support the proposed bill.

I would like to close the a quote from the President of the United States, who also enjoys vigorous support from Republicans on this committee, regarding his time leading the Miss America pageant:

"I'll tell you the funniest thing is that I'll go backstage before a show and everyone's getting dressed. "No men are anywhere, and I'm allowed to go in, because I'm the owner of the pageant and therefore I'm inspecting it. 'Is everyone OK?' You know, they're standing there with no clothes. 'Is everybody OK?' And you see these incredible-looking women, and so I sort of get away with things like that."

Thank you for your time.

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