

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, firstly, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Maxwell Gagnon. I am 20 years old, and I am a lifelong resident of Lewiston. My pronouns are he/him, and I am a transgender man, meaning I was born a girl, but live as a man. I am here in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

When I was seven years old, I stood on top of the playground, looked down, and hoped that when I jumped off, it would kill me. After that, I did not go a year of my life without severe suicidal thoughts, plans, or action.

At 12, I realized I was transgender. For the next year, I did everything I could think of not to be. I tried makeup and dresses, and anything that could feminize myself. I was at one of the lowest points I've ever been.

As I moved to High School, I knew I couldn't take it any longer. Although my family had not shown they were safe, my school had. I came out as a transgender man and began my social transition. I changed my name and my pronouns, and my school respected my gender identity. For the first year since I was seven years old, I did not experience suicidal thoughts.

It is because of the support of my school that I am able to stand here today, and ask you all to vote against the bills put forward. My story is not unique. The Williams Institute found that 81% of transgender adults have considered suicide. Today's bills are targeting children, who are more vulnerable. A study by the queer suicide hotline The Trevor Project has found that anti-trans legislation has increased suicide attempts in transgender youth by up to 72%. We cannot afford to add to this. Maine should be a safe place for our kids to grow up. No child should ever be bullied by their own government.

LD 1002 alone would have kept me from receiving the support I desperately needed. Bans on trans kids in sports or bathrooms, or the vague wording of 'facilities', will only further target and isolate them. We have studies that show the damage these laws can cause, and none to support them being implemented to begin with. If an issue does arise, we can address it then, but not before. There is too much at stake to pass these laws with the information available to us today.

I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills, and ensure that our kids receive the same opportunities for love and support as I did. They deserve it. Thank you.