

Good morning/afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for your service and for giving me the opportunity to testify.

My name is Susan Stark and I live in Falmouth, Maine. I have lived and worked as an educator in Maine for 26 years. I have been blessed with an amazing husband of 25 years and three wonderful children.

I am here to speak in opposition to all the bills that the committee will hear today.

As an educator, I have always worked to create a welcoming and inclusive classroom for all my students. Over the years, I have had several openly transgender students in class. But until my youngest child came out as trans a few years ago, I discovered that I didn't really understand what it meant to be trans. I imagine some of you may not have a transgender person as a close friend or a family member. And so my testimony is especially for you.

Sports have always been an important part of the life of our family. I am a former DI college athlete; my husband was also a college athlete; and all three of our kids played middle and high school sports every season. When my youngest came out as trans, our family was showered with love and support from her high school coaches, teammates, competitors, teachers, friends, her employer, our friends, my parents, community members, and our large extended families. This was an incredible blessing.

We also experienced negativity from a small handful of people in Maine. I suspect that for some, this negativity came from a place of not understanding what it is to be trans. As someone who may not have always understood this either, I can tell you that trans people want nothing different from what cis people want: we all want to work hard at school and in the workforce, to find community with loving family and friends, to serve and give back to our communities, and above all, to be accepted as the person we are.

There is nothing new about transgender people. Trans people have existed since people have existed, in all cultures, ancient and modern; indeed numerous cultures dating back to 5000 BC have described transgender members of their societies.

Trans kids just want to be accepted as the gender they are. Acknowledging this certainly benefits trans people. But, in fact, it benefits all of us to know that we will be accepted as we are: accepted in our religion, accepted in our race, accepted in our sexuality, accepted if our body is or becomes disabled, accepted in our cultural heritage, and accepted in our gender identity (in the bathroom, the locker room, on sports teams, and everywhere else). This is a powerful and beautiful reality that Maine has been a leader in cultivating. **Please vote ought not to pass**, so that we can together continue to build a society that accepts us all.