

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am the Rev. Dr. Kharma Amos, I use she/her pronouns, I am a resident of Lisbon, and I serve as the Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brunswick.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee in person today. I am here in vehement opposition to the anti-trans bills before this committee.

I have been a minister for twenty-three years, and for all 23 of them I have been honored to serve with trans and non-binary people— children, adults, and seniors. Too many of them have had to develop a resilience that most of us never have to, and I say that not to valorize them but to lament the injustice of our world makes this necessary.

There are trans and non-binary youth in my community who have self-selected out of school sports in order to protect themselves from bullying. And, I want you to know that it breaks my heart to listen to parents talk about the conversations they have at home with their kids about how to avoid calling attention to themselves so they won't be targeted. I cry right along with them when they describe what it's like to tell their child that maybe sitting out on team sports is a wiser choice, even though it's their favorite thing in the world and all their siblings and friends can do it without worry. Or, those who ration their water intake hoping they can make it through the school day without having to use the bathroom.

This should not be what is dominating the minds and hearts of schoolchildren, or motivating a family's decision about where to live or what schools are safe enough for their children to attend. Every child in Maine deserves an education, along with all that that entails. That means they all deserve to use the facilities – bathrooms and locker rooms and classrooms. They all deserve to take part in social and sporting activities that provide essential experiential learning about teamwork, self-confidence, compassion, and so much more.

The truth about these mean-spirited bills is that they harm not only trans and non-binary students, but all students – especially the girls they claim to protect. And make no mistake that gender policing will affect all students detrimentally. There is no one way to be a girl or to play sports like a girl, but these bills make it likely that any girl will be subject to a gender-check if others claim she is too tall, too strong, or too good.

Please, for the love of all that is good and holy, vote NO on these bills!