

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am the Rev. Dr. Jodi Cohen Hayashida, I am an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and a resident of Auburn where I served a parish for 23 years. I now organize the statewide movement Multi-faith Justice Maine under the auspices of the Maine People's Alliance and I'm here to testify in opposition to the bills that are before you today.

I spend many of my days traveling around the state speaking with people of deep faith from across the spectrum of traditions. While we do not ignore our differences, when we speak of the body we do not speak of it as a battleground or a political football. We honor the body, all bodies, as beloved and holy. We understand them to be a reflection and home of the sacred.

When we sit and pray together, grounding ourselves in our deepest beliefs and practicing being honest and vulnerable with one another, our discussions of justice and fairness acknowledge complexity and overlapping layers of fear and we make space for all of it. But most importantly, we are attentive to the false comfort of lazy answers that seem simple but are cruel and dismissive of our shared truth that not only is every life is sacred but as people of faith we are called to ensure that every life is treated as such.

Every faith tradition calls out the illusion of otherness, of separation from one another and the holy. The consistency of that teaching is met by our equally consistent insistence that division will keep us safe and strong.

All of these bills reflect and are grounded in that false belief. All of these bills dismiss our shared humanity. All of these bills refute the fundamental belief of universal belovedness. All of these bills participate in the breaking of beloved community instead of its building.

Different kinds of answers emerge when conversations are held among people grounded in love and a deep and shared respect for one another.

These bills do not reflect that love and these bills do not reflect that respect.

We can do better and I believe we are called to do better.

Please vote "ought not to pass" on these bills.

Thank you

Rev. Dr. Jodi Cohen Hayashda

Multifaith Justice Maine

Auburn, ME