



Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
Testimony in Opposition to:

L.D. 380, *An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services*

May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Heide Lester, I live in South Paris, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly oppose L.D. 380 because Maine has long been responsive to the needs of young people by enacting laws to allow them to get needed care.

Maine is a leader in the nation with regard to laws and policies that positively shape and protect LGBTQ+ people's lives. Inclusive healthcare and criminal justice laws, state nondiscrimination laws, the ability for transgender people to correct their name and gender marker on identity documents, and inclusive parental recognition policies all benefit LGBTQ+ Mainers. Our state has anti-bullying laws and policies, a conversion therapy ban covering LGBTQ+ students, and protections for LGBTQ+ youth in the child welfare system.<sup>1</sup> And, we have afforded older minors greater opportunity to make their own informed treatment decisions for certain forms of health care, including reproductive, mental health, and emergency services, and drug and alcohol counseling. Maine understands that requiring parental consent can sometimes pose an insurmountable obstacle in accessing needed healthcare, and so has created comprehensive and considered pathways for mature and informed youth to obtain medically-necessary treatment, including gender-affirming care.

Research unequivocally demonstrates that gender-affirming care improves the mental health and overall well-being of gender diverse youth.<sup>2</sup> Gender-affirming care encompasses many types of healthcare needs and supports, and social and medical gender-affirming healthcare practices have been demonstrated to yield lower rates of adverse mental health outcomes, build self-esteem, and improve overall quality of life for transgender and gender diverse youth. Quite simply, the treatment can be life improving and even life saving.

We recognize and value the vital role parents play in nurturing, supporting, and guiding their children, and understand that a strong parent-child relationship serves as a key protective factor for youth.<sup>3</sup> Parents should be able to provide medically necessary care for their child consistent with medical standards of care. And, young people in need of care should not have to suffer simply because others - including the parents they love - do not understand their condition or support the care they require.

We urge you to vote "Ought Not To Pass" on this bill, and continue to empower older, informed youth to make decisions about their own gender-affirming care.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)

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<sup>1</sup> "Maine's Equality Profile." *Movement Advancement Project*, [lgbtmap.org/equality\\_maps/profile\\_state/ME](https://lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/ME).

<sup>2</sup> Green Amy E, et al. "Association of Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy With Depression, Thoughts of Suicide, and Attempted Suicide Among Transgender and Nonbinary Youth." *The Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34920935/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34920935/).

<sup>3</sup> Sieving, Renee E, et al. "Youth-Adult Connectedness: A Key Protective Factor for Adolescent Health." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5559097/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5559097/).



Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
Testimony in Opposition to:

L.D. 1337, *An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding  
Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters*  
L.D. 1432, *An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act*

May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Heide Lester, I live in South Paris, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly oppose L.D. 1337 and L.D. 1432 and their attempts to weaken the Maine Human Rights Act.

L.D. 1337 would remove women's shelters from the definition of public accommodations in the Maine Human Rights Act. This elimination means that women's shelters would no longer be prohibited from discriminating on the basis of *any* of the protected classes. So, if this bill were to pass, a shelter could reject any woman because of her race, color, sexual orientation or gender identity, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, or national origin. Further, shelters that serve women, such as domestic violence and homeless shelters, encounter the people they serve at their most vulnerable – when they are in fear for their safety or experiencing an emergency. Any woman could face these challenges, and transgender women are no exception: more than half of all transgender and non-binary people have experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their lifetimes<sup>1</sup> and 36% of transgender people in Maine have experienced homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

We further oppose L.D. 1337 and its reliance on the current administration's interpretation of Title IX. We believe that the general provisions of Title IX prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex protect transgender athletes from harassment and discrimination in education because, as the Supreme Court stated in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, it is impossible to discriminate against a person because of their sexual orientation or gender identity without discriminating against them based on sex. While Title IX has been used extensively to address discrimination against women, it protects *everyone* from being treated unfairly.

Finally, we oppose L.D. 1432 and its attempt to remove consideration of gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act. Recall that in 2005, discrimination based on sexual orientation – the definition of which included gender identity at that time – was first prohibited under the Maine Human Rights Act. For 20 years, our state has protected Maine residents who are vulnerable to discrimination – and through several tests in court before gender identity was added as a protected class in 2021<sup>3</sup> – because we believe in the fundamental principles of treating everyone with fairness, dignity, and respect. We urge you to vote “Ought Not To Pass” on these bills, and to preserve the Maine Human Rights Act.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)

<sup>1</sup> “The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey.” National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016, [transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf](https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> “2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Maine State Report.” National Center for Transgender Equality, 2017, [transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTSMESStateReport\(1017\).pdf](https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTSMESStateReport(1017).pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Billings, Randy. “Timeline: Gender Identity in Maine's Human Rights Act.” *Press Herald*, 20 Apr. 2025, [pressherald.com/2025/04/20/timeline-gender-identity-in-maines-human-rights-act/](https://pressherald.com/2025/04/20/timeline-gender-identity-in-maines-human-rights-act/).