

MaryBeth Nolt
Portland, Maine
May 8, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is MaryBeth Nolt, I'm a resident of Portland, and I am here as a teacher, a person of faith, and the parent of a trans kid. I am here today in opposition of all the bills before the committee today, in particular LD1002 and LD1704.

My husband and I were both raised in faith communities that were not particularly accepting, and so when we looked for a church home for our family in Maine, we were pleased to see the affirming and welcoming stance embraced by the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. At that time we had no idea who our children would grow to be - but we were determined to always find safe spaces where they could be their fullest, truest selves.

Ten years later, our older child shared with us that he is trans, and would like for us to use a new name for him. The very first community to embrace him was the Maine Episcopal Youth Group, as well as our church home, which hosted a re-naming ceremony for him, honoring his new name and his place in his church family.

Our kid is very lucky to have a family and faith community that embrace every bit of who he is. But as a teacher, I recognize that not every kid has these support systems. For some kids, schools are the only place that they can identify and feel like their truest selves.

If these bills were to pass, schools might not be that safe space some kids need, the only safe space some kids have. The Trevor Project has identified that trans kids experience higher rates of depression than their adolescent peers, and that they are 2-2.5 times as likely to attempt suicide. LGBTQ+ students with at least one accepting adult in their life are significantly less likely to make these attempts. As a teacher, I have seen first-hand that supporting kids in their identity helps them to be more comfortable at school. Allowing schools and teachers to honor students' preferences for a chosen name, pronouns, and bathroom aligning with identity does

not create a dangerous environment - rather, it is a method of harm reduction to help a marginalized group of kids survive a particularly challenging period in their lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you.