

Erica A. Boissonneault, Gorham Maine, May 8th 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Erica Boissonneault and I am a resident of Gorham Maine. I am here to testify against proposed bill ME LD1432 An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act.

Five & a half years ago my spouse came out to me as transgender. I didn't fully understand what that meant, but I have learned a lot since. She has told me what it was like growing up knowing she was different, but not being able to tell a soul, not even her parents, for fear of how they would react. Because at that time, being gay could mean being turned out by your family and being shunned by everyone you knew. Being transgender was even worse – the only examples of transgender people were on shows like Jerry Springer or as the dead prostitute on a cop show. She knew from the earliest ages, she needed to keep her being transgender a secret if she wanted to live a “normal” life.

My spouse is so much happier and healthier now. She can sleep at night. It's easier for her to get up in the morning knowing she doesn't have to pretend to be someone she is not. But also since she came out, I have seen and felt the anger and apprehension of watching multiple anti-transgender bills being proposed and passed in other states and the fear of having the same happen here. I've spent sleepless nights worrying if our marriage will be invalidated, if our child will be taken away, if my spouse will lose her job, her healthcare, her freedom if bills like this and all the others being proposed today pass.

I have met several transgender people and have listened to their struggles – the joy of finally living as themselves and the fear of what that might mean as far as their place in society. They live in daily fear of losing jobs, respect, or as this bill is proposing, their civil rights.

For twenty years this law has protected sexual orientation, which includes gender identity for all Mainers. How is removing gender identity as a protected class a benefit? In what way can this amendment be viewed as anything other than harmful to an already marginalized community? What is to be gained except to discriminate against a tiny portion of the population that is doing no harm to anyone else as the past twenty years have demonstrated?

I have already seen the harm discriminating against transgender people can do. I have an acquaintance who is an established professional that had a signed employment contract terminated just because the employer found out she was transgender. After a year of tremendous stress and legal expense, the contract was honored, but without the protections of this bill, she would have had no recourse and might well still be unemployed. How much experience and expertise will be lost if discrimination against transgender people is allowed? And if one group's rights are taken away, who is next? What is protecting the rest but the whims of public opinion? The rights of all humans are inalienable. Have transgender people in Maine lost their humanity or is this bill just to stop them from being treated as human? I beg this committee - do not give this amendment any consideration other than to deny it. Please, vote no on this bill and others like it, now and for always. I thank you for your time and consideration.