

My name is Jed James. I am a 57-year-old transgender man, and I live in Bath, Maine.

From my earliest memories, I knew that I was a boy. Despite my parents' best attempts to convince me otherwise, I was quite certain that I was male, and the world often perceived me as such. When I was as young as 3, people began harassing my mother and me about my presence in women's bathrooms and women's changing rooms. This did not get easier as I grew older. In high school, I was once harassed in an opposing basketball team's locker room for being "a boy," despite my just having competed in a girl's game. In my 20s, I was forcibly removed from a women's bathroom by a police officer who threw me up against a wall and threatened me with arrest. In my early 30s, prior to transition, I fled from a convenience store in Oklahoma, where the staff had begun to call the police because I had used the women's bathroom. Until I transitioned, I was repeatedly gawked at, yelled at, laughed at and threatened for being in women-only spaces. Throughout all of this, I was ostensibly a cisgender woman; I was assigned female at birth, I identified as a woman and had made no changes to my gender.

Bills LD233, LD868 and LD 1134 seek to limit participation in girls' sports to girls assigned female at birth, while also limiting use of locker rooms and bathrooms to what are considered "biological females." There are many issues with these bills, but I will speak to the fact that right now, as far as we know, there are two trans feminine high school athletes in the state of Maine. The fact is that transgender girls are not flooding the athletic fields; neither are they flooding girls' locker rooms and bathrooms. Approximately 1.6% of HS students in Maine identify as trans, and typically trans girls and women make up a smaller portion of the transgender population. That means that there are very few trans girls out there for these laws to affect.

Who will these laws most impact? They will impact girls like I was—girls who do not fit society's idea of what a girl should look like. They will lend permission to those who would choose to harass, isolate, shame and bully girls who are considered too masculine or too strong, who identify as or are suspected of being LGBTQ, or who are being targeted for any number of other reasons. They will promote school cultures of cruelty, exclusion and gossip instead of promoting atmospheres of understanding, decency and acceptance. In doing so, they will make life harder for any kid who stands out.

I was a child of the 70s and 80s, and it shocks me to think that now, 50 years down the road, we are looking at worsening conditions for girls who, for whatever reason, are considered by someone to be not girl enough. While it was miserable to be teased in a locker room back in the 80s, we are now looking at laws that could have put a pause on the whole preceding game, while school authorities conferred about how to prove that I was a girl. And how might they have gone about that? How will we verify students' genders today?

Are we talking about a situation where all students tote around their birth certificates? Are we talking about anatomy checks?

LD 1704 is redundant to the other laws, so I will not say much about it, except that it would restrict schools' ability to make their own choices about how to best manage their school cultures and keep their students safe.

In reference to LD 1002, I will again speak briefly from my own experience. Like many LGBTQ youth, I did not have supportive parents. They are fully supportive today, but back then, they struggled. I was extremely lonely and confused throughout high school and college, and onward through my young adulthood, until at last, in my late 30s, I was able to transition. If I'd had one teacher whom I could have entrusted with my identity, it would have made all the difference and could have potentially saved me many lost years.

Students have often looked to teachers for support about things that they do not feel safe talking with their parents about, particularly when their parents are intolerant and abusive. Furthermore, students have historically used school as a place to experiment with different identities, which is why high school yearbook photos are often such an embarrassment. It is not at all unusual for kids to use nicknames only at school. It makes no sense to punish teachers for honoring a students' chosen name and pronouns. Doing so makes one kind of experimentation stand out as aberrant and criminal, while others go unchecked. Many children who experiment with pronouns will do just that—experiment. For others, there may be great consequence in being forced to repress identities that they are punished for at home. 40% of trans youth have <sup>at home</sup> considered suicide, and 80% of trans youth have considered it. We need to trust teachers to provide support to at-risk students by honoring a simple request that harms no one.