

Testimony of Spencer Law, resident of Pownal and Minister for Intergenerational Innovation at the
First Congregational Church of Bridgton
In opposition to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the joint standing committee on Judiciary, my name is Spencer Law, I am a resident of Pownal, and I am here to speak in opposition to all bills being heard today. I serve as a pastor at the First Congregational Church of Bridgton and as the director of the Western Maine Children's Ministry Hub.

As a pastor, I am confident that the lives of the children and families I care for professionally and personally would be negatively affected by the enactment and enforcement of these bills. The youth I work with benefit in many ways from existing school athletics programs, where they learn teamwork, self improvement, and what it takes to set and achieve goals. Under LD 233, LD 868, and LD 1134, the culture of school athletics would shift and become an environment dictated by judgment, invasion of minors' privacy, and forced disclosure of personal medical histories. The anxiety and awkwardness of team tryouts would be multiplied by the intense intrusion of medical testing, inspection of private records, and the spirit of the game would be lost entirely to litigation.

These short-sighted efforts to make athletics seemingly more fair for some girls would, in reality, create more obstacles for all girls in Maine who wish to participate in sports. In a moment when loneliness and isolation are an epidemic,¹ we ought to give all children more opportunities to find meaningful social connections rather than taking those opportunities away. In the same way, policies like those proposed in LD 1002 and LD 1134 would further isolate and discriminate against children who are already vulnerable and in need of support. All children deserve to be called by their own names, use the bathroom at their own discretion, and live without fear of retribution from adults.

I am here standing before you today because when I came out as a trans teenager, I received the support and care I needed to thrive. Teachers who called me by name offered the compassion I needed to feel like I belonged in this world. When the all gender bathroom at my high school was suddenly relabeled "staff only," I held on through long school days until I could get to a bathroom that felt safe, and I suffered for it. My transition has afforded me comfort and security in public bathrooms, but that would no longer be the case under these bills. Children aren't the only people who use the bathroom in schools. Under LD 868, if I went to support one of the teens from our youth group performing in a high school play, I would be legally required to use the women's bathroom during intermission. Any

¹ Office of the Surgeon General (OSG). (2023). *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community*. US Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>.

trans teachers or administrative staff in our schools would be similarly forced into bathrooms that are at best uncomfortable and at worst unsafe environments.

Distinguished committee members, I come to you with good news of great joy: the existence and joy of transgender people only serves to enhance your life. When trans people flourish, we create opportunities for everyone to rethink what might be keeping us from a deeper truth. We are a reminder of everyone's shared humanity. We are your neighbors, pastors, teachers, friends, and loved ones. We are whole, complicated, resilient, real people like you who live and work in your community. Just like you, we need to use the bathroom sometimes and want to play sports with our friends. We, too, are dedicated to leaving this world better than we found it, whether that means transforming systems of injustice to build a more compassionate world for everyone, or just putting the toilet seat back down.

I appreciate your time and consideration. I urge you to love your neighbor and vote ought not to pass.

Thank you,

Spencer Law
Minister for Intergenerational Innovation
First Congregational Church of Bridgton

Testimony of Spencer Law, resident of Pownal and Minister for Intergenerational Innovation at the
First Congregational Church of Bridgton
In opposition to LD 1337 and LD 1432
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the joint standing committee on Judiciary, my name is Spencer Law, I am a resident of Pownal, and I am here to speak in opposition to all bills being heard today. I serve as a pastor at the First Congregational Church of Bridgton and as the director of the Western Maine Children's Ministry Hub.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and God separated the light from the darkness. There was night, and there was day, and it was good. And then there was dawn, and sunrise, and the early hours of the morning, and while the waters of the sky separated from the waters of the earth, there was sunset, and dusk, and the last, lingering shadows of evening. And all of it– the night and the day and everything in between– was good. Then, God made plants and animals, and the fungi in between, the sun and moon and stars and the planets in between.

Finally, God made people, male and female and everything in between, and it was good. And even if only the shorthand version of the creation story made it down to us through the generations, we know from the beauty revealed all around us how much lies in between, and how holy sunrise and spore and Saturn truly are, even if they aren't named in our sacred texts. I come before you today to speak on behalf of the holy in between, not asking that you might fully wrap your mind around the complexity of creation or what it means to be transgender, but that you might humbly choose to act out of love for your neighbor nonetheless.

The requirements proposed in LD 1337 would allow for explicit discrimination against transgender women, who are often at high risk of domestic abuse and violence. Women in need of emergency shelter deserve to have a safe place to live and rest, no matter their medical history. LD 1432 would legalize discrimination against anyone whose gender presentation falls outside of the norm. Gender identity can be construed to include gender presentation, the way we represent our sense of gender through self expression, so this bill would make it possible for an employer to reject a woman applying for a job because she prefers to wear pants instead of a skirt or for a landlord to evict a man because he let his hair grow too long.

After graduating from Yale Divinity School, I moved to Maine rather than going back home to live in the south in part because I believed that Maine would be a safer place for me to live and eventually start a family as a queer, trans person. I want to live in a place that respects my right to live free from discrimination and harassment, and I have faith that Maine will continue to be that place if we can recognize our common humanity and make policy out of love rather than hatred or fear. I am grateful

for your time and consideration, and I urge you to support a more just Maine by voting ought not to pass.

Thank you,

Spencer Law
Minister for Intergenerational Innovation
First Congregational Church of Bridgton

Testimony of Spencer Law, resident of Pownal and Minister for Intergenerational Innovation at the
First Congregational Church of Bridgton
In opposition to LD 380
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the joint standing committee on Judiciary, my name is Spencer Law, I am a resident of Pownal, and I am here to speak in opposition to all bills being heard today. I serve as a pastor at the First Congregational Church of Bridgton and as the director of the Western Maine Children's Ministry Hub.

I held the hand of a mother whose voice cracked and broke into gentle tears as she described what it was like to hear that her child was transgender. A whirlwind of emotions spilled out in the moment— confusion, fear, regret, grief, and maybe even the faintest trace of hope. Her child had been so unhappy for so long, pulling away from the rest of the family and giving up on every hobby and activity that used to be of interest until only the shell of her child remained. She knew that something had to change, but was it really this? Transitioning would expose her child to all kinds of bullying and discrimination from the school bus to the statehouse, and she didn't know if she could take seeing her child go through any more pain.

Interning as a chaplain at Yale New Haven Health's pediatric gender affirming care clinic meant that I ministered to a wide range of children and families at all stages of their gender journey. In the clinic, we used the language of gender journey because it represents the breadth and depth of what gender affirming care actually looks like. For most of our patients, gender affirming care meant regular access to support groups, counseling sessions, and getting new clothes or shampoo with the perfect floral or woody scent.

For older patients, we coordinated with an interdisciplinary team of social workers, endocrinologists, psychiatrists, therapists, attorneys, and nurses to provide prescription hormone replacement therapy and social support as patients navigated the next steps of their journey. In every case, all support and treatment we provided was done with informed consent, and the rates of regret for those receiving gender affirming healthcare were among the lowest in the entire hospital system. It is still far more likely for someone having voluntary plastic surgery to regret their decision to have surgery than a trans person is to regret receiving gender affirming care.²

Patients and families came to us for care because they knew that our interdisciplinary team had the wide-reaching expertise and skills necessary to help them move through the complicated and evolving

² Sarah M. Thornton, Armin Edalatpour, and Katherine M. Gast. (2024). "A Systematic Review of Patient Regret After Surgery- A Common Phenomenon in Many Specialties but Rare Within Gender-Affirmation Surgery." *The American Journal of Surgery*, 234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjsurg.2024.04.021>.

journeys with gender. They came to us from out of state because the places they lived could not and would not provide adequate or any necessary healthcare for trans people. But most of all, patients came to us because they knew that exploring their gender and becoming their most authentic self would be the single most life-saving and life-giving journey they could take. So, I held the hands of parents who came to us in confusion and fear and assured them that their child was stepping into a journey of possibility and growth, and that we would be along to support them wherever that journey led.

I shared so confidently with parents about the possibilities in store for their trans children because those were the words I wished I could have shared with that first terrified mother of a trans child whose hand I held— my own mom. I knew on the other side of my own gender journey how much relief, growth, and joy was out there for trans children and their families because I have been a trans child myself, and I know how much it means to receive gender affirming care at that age. For me, and for most, it didn't and doesn't look like the intensive medical interventions you might imagine, but instead it looks more like social support, preventative care, and counseling— equipping children with the resources they need to learn more about themselves and make educated decisions about their own health and wellness.

I stand here before you today because of the support and gender affirming care I received as a trans teenager, support and care that enabled me to become my most authentic self who now shares that same support and care with others. This is the cycle of life and love we can choose, even in the face of fear— a cycle that does not nitpick for the sake of exclusion, but one that sees all we hold in common and cultivates practices of collective care. I humbly invite you into this world of care, knowing that you have friends, loved ones, and neighbors who are trans and have trans children whether you know it or not. Gender affirming care is life-saving for people of all ages, and though it might look different than you expect or not fall in your realm of understanding, remember that it does not take your full understanding to see the real needs of your neighbors and act out of love anyway. I appreciate your time and consideration, and I urge you to vote ought not to pass.

Thank you,

Spencer Law
Minister for Intergenerational Innovation
First Congregational Church of Bridgton