

Jacqueline Violet Scott Ferlito
Age 26
Resident of Waterville, Maine
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My Testimony 9:30am

(LD 233, LD 868, LD1002, LD 1134, LD 1704)

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee; thank you for the opportunity today to address the Committee directly. My name is Jackie Ferlito, and I am a queer and trans woman currently living in Waterville.

I am here today in opposition to the bills before the committee. While I could share with y'all the unending amount of statistics from accredited sources on the clear benefits of supporting transgender youth in our public schools, and I'm sure many folks will do such today, I instead want to share a small piece of my experience as a closeted trans youth while in grade school.

In high school, long since having figured out I was trans but being too terrified to come out of the closet, I had a friend who was living publicly as a trans man. Our school administration decided that his existence was kept unseen. If he had to use the restroom he was required to use one of two faculty restrooms in our two storied building. When changing for gym class he quite literally had to change in the janitor's closet. Whether intentional or not, the school administration decided on a policy of "if I can't see the problem then it must not exist". It didn't take long for the greater student body to pick up on this. I watched day after day as my friend

was berated in the halls, called a tranny, and received numerous death threats. It got to the point where my group of friends decided someone must always accompany him in and out of school out of fear of the threats. I came to school more times than I can count ready for a physical fight. As a closeted trans woman at the time, I'm still processing the terror I experienced while in a place that was suppose to be safe.

Schools need to be places where we learn empathy. Trans youth deserve the right to be themselves without fear of reciprocity. So many of the issues brought up in these bills were litigated over a decade ago, and just as it was then, these bills don't solve issues, but rather create them. Just the other day two cis women were kicked out of a Boston hotel after being forced to "prove" their gender while using the restroom. Simply put, these bills do not protect children, but place them in further harm.

Thanks you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jackie Ferlito