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Kirsten Griffith

South Portland

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.

My name is Kirsten Griffith, I'm a resident of South Portland, and I work for the Maine Transgender Network. I am here in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

It is clear to me from the makeup of today's testifying Mainers and the testimony of all those who have already spoken against today's bills, that we know that Maine is not a state that takes rights away. The country also knows this, as evidenced by relocation inquiries from out of state trans folks and caregivers of trans kids who have reached out to MaineTransNet since November and increasingly since January, totaling nearly thirty families whose research has told them that Maine might be safe, might even welcome them.

Still, I'd like to offer reminders of why protecting the Maine Human Rights Act is right for all of us.

Taking away Mainers' human rights harms Maine's economy: restricting the ways in which trans Mainers can safely engage with housing, employment, and education.

Taking away rights will impact Maine's aging population: young Mainers are already leaving the state for locations with more balanced income to expense

ratios, and only by maintaining these protections can we hope to keep and welcome or welcome back young Mainers after they complete higher education.

This amendment also stands to harm Cisgender Mainers: If my trans partner can be discriminated against in housing, my housing security is equally at risk. If they can be discriminated against at work, our household income is in constant jeopardy, adding a perpetual hum of anxiety to my days.

I won't condescend to you by explaining the overt harms to trans Mainers, rather invite you to consider whether you have ever existed underneath the fear of losing your income, or your home, or your community, and to consider the impact of a return to daily life under that weight.

As the Maine Human Rights Act currently reads, we are a safe haven for skilled professionals; entrepreneurs; artists and creatives; ALL who seek a home state where they and their families are safe from the harm permitted in other states. I am proud to be a Mainer, proud of our allies in the judiciary, and hope you will maintain the Maine Human Rights Act on which much of that pride stands.

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!