

Hello, my name is Michael d'Hemecourt and I live in Falmouth with my wife and our four kids, one of whom is transgender.

This journey with our daughter started very young. At just 18 months old, her first full sentence was, "I a daughter." At the time, we brushed it aside and assumed she was confused.

Like many parents, we looked for what we thought were typical "boy" interests, trucks, dinosaurs, superheroes. But no matter what we introduced, those interests never stuck. Instead, she gravitated toward princess toys, dresses, and makeup.

At first, we resisted. We took those things away. Regretfully, we tried to control it. But she adapted, using markers as makeup and shirts as long hair. Eventually, we allowed her to express herself at home, but not in public.

This was not easy for us. My wife and I both come from conservative, Catholic families. And for me, this was my boy, my namesake, my sidekick. It felt like losing something I thought I understood.

But after many difficult moments, we realized the real harm was not coming from who she was. It was coming from us trying to change her. It just was not worth it.

So we started learning. We found support groups, educated ourselves, and focused on what every parent wants: raising a happy, healthy child.

Fast forward nine years and we are busy like all parents, running our kids to after-school activities. For the most part, our middle daughter is a well-adjusted kid who loves animals and wants to be a famous singer.

My daughter and kids like her just want to be kids. They should worry about a quiz at school or what friend's house they are going to after school, not whether they can safely do something as basic as use the bathroom.

And it does not stop at bathrooms. It extends to sports. If kids like my daughter are forced to play on teams that do not align with who they are, many of them simply will not play at all. They lose the chance to be part of a team, to build friendships, learn to win and lose and to experience all the mental health benefits that come with sports. They lose the chance to just be kids.

Until now, we have felt safe in Maine. Maine has already taken steps to ensure all people are treated with dignity and respect. LD 2239 moves us backward and sends a message that kids like our daughter do not belong and families like ours do not belong. It is painful to even think about what it would mean if our daughter could not live here safely and as herself.

I know the reality of kids being born transgender is not easy to grasp and accept. It was not easy for me at first either. But I ask you to keep an open mind, an open heart, and open arms for our daughter and kids like her.