

Testimony in opposition to LD 2239  
Auburn, ME  
4.15.26

*Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,*

I am the Rev. Dr. Jodi Cohen Hayashida. I am a resident of Auburn and I organize a statewide movement called Multi-faith Justice Maine. I am testifying in opposition to the proposed ballot measure, LD 2239.

Last fall, I sat next to a young woman at one of the Lewiston polling locations as she collected signatures for this ballot measure. She lived in Colorado but had driven up that morning from MA where she had been working on another campaign. She hadn't fully read the proposed measure and was hazy on the details. I couldn't tell whether or not she agreed with it. It didn't matter, for her it was a way to pay the bills. Most of the people I saw add their signature to the proposed measure also didn't read it. And that didn't matter either, because more often than not what I saw and heard as people signed was simple excitement at the opportunity to stick it to the trans community. It was vicious and it was gleeful.

In my work I spend every day in conversation with people of faith who differ in worship, in belief, in language, and who don't all like each other all the time. In our differences, though, we are held together by a shared belief that we are called to love each other. To recognize every life as sacred. To push through discomfort and treat even the fearsome stranger as beloved, knowing that when we do, in time the stranger often becomes the beloved in truth.

This ballot measure refutes the invitation of every faith tradition to do the hard and holy work of moving towards those whom we do not yet understand and instead panders to our weakest and most fearful selves. It turns our anger at the legitimate ways the girls of this state are under threat into a mockery and then into a weapon against another vulnerable community. All for political gain.

Maine can do better.

All Mainers deserve better.

I ask that you oppose this ballot measure.

Thank you.