

March 4, 2024
Buxton, Maine

Re: ***In support of LD 227: An Act Regarding Health Care in the State.***

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services committee.

My name is Julia Colpitts. I was born in Maine 70+ years ago and currently live in Buxton.

My body fits my identity, as probably yours does, since trans people make up only about 1.03% of the adult population in the US. My first-born child was not as lucky. 30+ years later “Michael to Michaela” is an ongoing journey of honesty, courage and self-discovery--laced with both joy and fear. Joy in the authenticity and comfort of finally being who she is. Fear in the very real dangers for trans people in a time when anger against them is stoked for political purposes.

Even as a young child there was a sweetness, sensitivity that didn't fit into the rough and tumble boy world (not that men can't be sweet and sensitive, but this intuitively felt different). 35 years ago, transgender wasn't really part of our awareness. So, it's taken time for the truth to emerge.

It raises such questions about what gender really is. How is it such a strong feeling of identity that it's worth changing one's life, even endangering one's life, in order to feel right, or true to self? I don't know, but Michaela does. And, I trust her. I see what peace this transition has brought her and how her life flows naturally again into her art, her creativity, her teaching, her relationships with others.

If you are, as I am, born to the body that fits, I hope you will stretch your empathy and understanding of what it might be like if that were not so. Imagine too what it would feel like if

someone had the ability to control you, to deny you your identity for some rage-filled reasons that suited their political or evangelical purposes.

Protecting the right for a person to be who they really are is crucial to the core values of our democracy in the right to the pursuit of happiness, for freedom and self-definition. **Trans rights are civil rights** and deserve to be encoded into the laws and structure of all parts of our societal structure, including in our medical system and health care structures. In a fair world, we might not need to state this so clearly within statute, particularly here in Maine which has respected a “live and let live” approach to the personal lives of others. However, given the ability of small numbers of loud and aggressive people in other states to turn this issue of personal choice into a hateful crusade, we need to err on the side of caution. We need to take proactive and protective action. In a time when anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation have developed in the trans community in direct response to the hateful and dangerous treatment they face, this protective action also states clearly that there is support in the world for their right to quietly be who they really are. In my work as a clinical social worker, I see the impact of the hatred and fear—as well as the positive impact of protective compassion.

Please vote “ought to pass” for LD 227, a bill that would protect Maine’s reproductive and gender-affirming care providers from attacks based on laws from away. Maine must protect health care providers, patients and access to essential care within its own borders. This bill protects established, best-practice medical care that is legal in Maine and ensures that our local providers and health care infrastructure aren’t negatively impacted by hostile laws in other states.

Thank you for your attention and care for all Maine citizens.

Respectfully submitted.