

I am writing in opposition to LD 227.

I am writing both as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker here in Maine and as a mother. My work as a mental health therapist in a variety of roles in Maine has allowed me to see first-hand the brokenness and hurt our youth have experienced. I work primarily with children, adolescents, and families. Throughout my career, I have worked in-home with families, become a part of their lives in a professional role, and experienced their vulnerabilities in the trauma and difficult life circumstances they live in. I have worked with and in school districts. I've worked in family therapy, reunification plans, and court systems. In all these settings, I have seen how generational trauma and the world's influence significantly impacts our youth and families. These difficulties they have experienced may be lifelong or just for a moment in time. Either way, their hurt matters. Because our children matter. Our professional organizations, licenses, fear, do not matter nearly as much as a human life matters. My hope is that all on either side of this bill can see that. These experiences, as difficult, tragic, and ongoing they may seem, they are only just temporary. There is hope for our youth. Their lives matter.

Instead of encouraging them to "follow their hearts" and accept their "feelings are final", (which, as youth, can we all remember the heartaches that felt so real and final at the time and now to look back and see how temporary the heartache actually was); Instead of encouraging a life-changing choice at vulnerable times, to seek, and hope, in temporary relief, we should be reminding our youth of what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and speaking truth to them. The truth is their lives matter. Who they were created to be matters. They are not a mistake. They are loved. They are loved right now in who they are. They were perfectly created. And love is not just agreeing with what makes them feel good in the moment. Love tells the truth. Love tells us that no matter what, you are seen and known and absolutely not a mistake. I hope Mainers can love our youth and oppose this bill.