

Joe Appel
Portland, Maine
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Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Joe Appel. I am a resident of Portland, where I and my wife raised two children who were born here and came up through Portland Public Schools, and where I co-own and run a small business whose products are sourced from 100% Maine-grown produce. I am here today in opposition to eight separate bills before the committee, all of which target the trans community broadly (children, adults, parents, athletes, students, health care practitioners and more): LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, LD 1704, LD 1337, LD 1432, and LD 380.

It is a barrage, and of course that's part of the point of the bills' supporters: to overwhelm those of us who feel that *everyone* in our state and communities deserves safety and support so that we'll give up in the face of it all. We will not give up. Maine has always been a haven for neighborly care, independent thinking, a respect for scientific understanding, a refusal to bend to political winds. I know of nowhere else in the world more committed to the Golden Rule, but all these bills transgress that basic will to do unto others as you would have others do unto you. I speak as a Jew — with a distinct though not unique understanding of how the powerless can be attacked by the powerful — but I do believe that every one of you on this committee, most Maine legislators and most Maine people have their own intimate understanding of this basic tenet of being human. Do not punch down. Do not lie or bend facts. Do not cause harm to children. Respect other people.

It would be laughable, were it not so heartbreaking, to see how a tiny minority of Mainers is being used as a scapegoat and targeted so mercilessly. It is this same minority whose rates of violent-crime victimization and suicidality are multiple times the average.

It is terrifying to see these bills' supporters ignore scientific and health-care consensus, in favor of cruelly preventing an easily disparaged group of people from gaining access to the health care and other basic services and activities. It is profoundly immoral to prevent school-age children from participating in athletics in a context where they feel comfortable and supported. It is profoundly immoral to claim, deceitfully, that someone claiming a gender identity different from their birth sex poses more of a physical threat to someone else in a bathroom or shelter than anyone else.

I don't know whether these bills' sponsors believe the misinformation, spread by national interest groups rather than from inside Maine in order to further their own political ends, or if they have just been deceived by the current culture warriors looking to take advantage of a political moment, or if they themselves are such political opportunists. But they are one of those: wrong, lied-to, or lying. And no matter which, Ought Not To Pass is the only sane and decent and Maine-worthy response to each one of these cruel, ignorant bills. Thank you for the opportunity to present these views to the Committee.