

Martha de Lyra Barker
Eliot, Maine

May 6, 2025

To: Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the
Judiciary Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to send my concerns to the Committee. My name is Martha Barker, I'm a resident of Eliot, and I am writing in support of the Transgender Community in Maine and to voice my opposition of the eight bills before the committee. Each one of these bills would be a tremendous setback not only for the Transgender Community but for the state as a whole—I am proud that Maine has become a supportive, open, and inclusive state and I am outraged that these bills are under consideration.

In the past 20 years, Maine has shown great support for the LGBTQ+ Community by the passage of LD1196 and later by amending the act to clarify that gender identity is a distinctly protected class, separate from sexual orientation. Persons who undergo gender transition or gender-affirming care to align their physical and social presentation with their true gender identity may go through social, legal, and/or medical processes. However they transition, it allows them to live authentically and comfortably in their true gender identity. A transgender male is male. A transgender female is female.

For persons (especially students) going through transition, athletic programs offer an outlet for their total well-being—the same as for cisgender students—with the overall benefits of physical exercise, developing teamwork skills and camaraderie, and the pride of representing their school or club. Barring students from athletic participation and from using restrooms and locker facilities sets Maine back by encouraging harassment and bullying, as well as violating their rights as human beings. Athletic programs have rules and guidelines in place to ensure the safety of all students. And quite honestly, most of these bills could set up cisgender (especially female) students to the same types of scrutiny, fear, and distrust that transgender students would experience.

I believe that students today are far more tolerant of the Transgender and LGBTQ+ Communities and are more willing to include them in every aspect of school and after-school life. Shutting them out and turning back to exclusion would mean a tremendous setback and create a division within schools and programs. Schools benefit from inclusivity of *all* kinds and *this* is what we should encourage in Maine.

Bills LD1337 and LD1432 would set us back as equally as the bills that affect students in athletic programs. Turning women away from protective services because they are transgender is the very act of cruelty. Again, transgender females are female; they are human and deserve the same rights as all females. And removing references to transgender persons (LD1432) under the Maine Human Rights Act is the very definition of discrimination. Trans rights *are* human rights.

I have known people who have transitioned and have seen the amazing and positive effects of gender alignment. This is not a trend, a fad, or something that people want to do to attract attention or win medals in competition—as many people are so misinformed to believe. It is a truly physical and real part of their lives. Aligning the physical and social presentation with their true gender identity can bring a person into a unified whole, whereas before transition, they may have experienced intense internal confusion, making it difficult or nearly impossible to thrive.

I ask that you consider deeply how these bills will effect young people and adults who are experiencing gender identity issues. They are human and deserve the same human rights as ALL of us—whether we are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, nonbinary, people of color, or people of different cultural and religious beliefs. They deserve to live their lives to the fullest.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote “Ought Not to Pass” on these bills.

Thank you,

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eliot
LD 1704

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