

Maggie Bertram
Ogunquit, ME
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Maggie Bertram, I'm a resident of Ogunquit, and I am writing today in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

Over the course of my career I have been a high school history teacher, a higher education administrator, and a professional mental health advocate. In that work, I have met many queer youth who have suffered from isolation, harassment, and bullying. These kids are desperate to find out where they belong, where they will be loved and accepted, and where they can be exactly who they are. That's what schools, sports, and community organizations are supposed to give them. Safe places where they can discover their purpose in this world, forge friendships, and develop confidence. Transgender kids are no different than their cisgender peers when it comes to wanting to feel accepted. What's different is that they live in communities that refuse to accept them. They are shamed, humiliated, and used as tools to score political points.

According to The Trevor Project's 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People, 46% of transgender and nonbinary young people considered suicide in the last year and 14% attempted suicide. These aren't just numbers. These are real human lives. Ones that can be saved through the lessons learned and connections made in school and sports. Ones that can be ended by our rejection and isolation.

As it pertains to LD223, LD868, LD1134 and LD1704, there is no evidence that cisgender girls are at more physical or emotional risk by playing sports, changing next to, or going to the bathroom with a transgender peer. However, the public school teacher who exploits a female student and enters into a sexual relationship with her, as happened at a former colleague's high school in Fort Collins, CO earlier this year, does pose a risk. The swimming coach at my wife's former high school in Tampa, FL who video recorded girls changing in the locker and training rooms, did traumatize dozens of girls. Trans students are not perpetrators. They are kids seeking affirmation, acceptance, and dignity. These bills seek to strip them of all three.

The changes to Maine law before you today are unnecessary, help no one, and only serve to distract from the real issues Maine families are struggling with like putting food on their tables, accessing healthcare that won't bankrupt them, and heating their homes next winter. Transgender Mainers deserve and are entitled to equal protection under the law. As such, I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you for reading my testimony today.

Sincerely,

Maggie Bertram
Ogunquit, ME