

Sam Caswell  
Topsham, 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 Sam Caswell and I'm a resident of Topsham. I'm here today in opposition of Bill 1002.

I'm trans and I started going by Sam in 7th grade. I had supportive parents, friends, and teachers, but it still wasn't easy for me. I remember some of my worst days in middle school and early high school were when I had a substitute teacher. Knowing that they would have to take attendance and call out my dead name for the whole class to hear made me anxious all day. Even though I was deeply affected by those experiences, I cannot imagine how much more difficult it would have been if I hadn't been able to use my name at all. We know that referring to trans youth by their chosen names can alleviate anxiety and other negative mental health symptoms. A 2019 study found that trans youth reported higher self-esteem, lower depressive symptoms, and less suicidal ideation when they were able to use their chosen name in more contexts. I noticed that improvement first hand when I finally got the school to change my name in the system so that I would only be called Sam. If calling a student by their name can have that many positive benefits, why would we not?

Even though this bill wouldn't affect me as a student, it would affect me as a future Maine educator. I want my students to feel safe and comfortable in my classroom. I want to foster their self-esteem and happiness. Referring to someone by their name is one of the most basic forms of respect. How can I hope to create the kind of environment students need if I am not allowed to show them that respect?

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on Bill 1002.