

## Testimony Opposing LD 1002

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

My name is Helen Cohen. As a lifelong Mainer, I oppose LD 1002. This bill is a solution in search of a problem-and it comes at the expense of vulnerable children.

Denying students the right to be called by their chosen name and gender is not just disrespectful, it's dangerous. According to The Trevor Project, using a transgender child's chosen name and pronouns significantly reduces suicide risk.

And let's be honest young people, and adults, go by shortened or preferred names all the time. I went to school with plenty of kids who used a nickname or their middle name.

Respecting a student's identity isn't new, it's just human. Codifying how schools refer to students based on documents, without room for context or care, is government overreach that disrespects both families and educators. This bill claims to support parental authority, but it removes the ability of parents who want to use their child's chosen name and pronouns to work directly with schools without legal intervention. That's not parental rights, it's state control. For many families, especially those without the means or time to pursue legal name or gender marker changes, that's not feasible. This bill forces them into a legal process to affirm their child's identity at school, placing the state between families and their kids.

Thank you for letting me share my perspective with the Committee. If a bill singles out and excludes a group of children from basic school life, it doesn't matter how it's framed, it is discriminatory. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on this bill.

Sincerely,

Helen Cohen