

Aoife Dowd
Portland, Maine
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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 Aoife Dowd and I'm a resident of Portland.

I'm here today as a queer woman and the partner of a trans man, asking the committee to make no changes to the Maine Human Rights act. Gender Identity has been part of the Maine Human Rights acts since 2005 and not since trans people have become a political scapegoat has anyone cared. While you may not want to believe this- all people trans and cis, have a gender identity. To many their identity is not something they've ever thought about, their expression is simply who they are. Gender expression among cis straight people has a great amount of variation that we now see as normal, but were not always accepted - women who prefer to wear pants, men who prefer to wear their hair longer. But it is only trans and queer people who are persecuted and attacked for their gender identities. For being different, for being seen differently.

We know already that in many ways the exclusion of gender identity from the MHRA is unnecessary, discrimination against queer and trans people is technically discrimination on the basis of sex and/or sexual orientation, so it is not immediately clear what effect removing "gender identity" would have on protections for trans Mainers. But what is clear is that these bills represent a national trend in attacking trans people.

Specifically, LD 1337 focuses on already vulnerable people, unhoused women and specifically unhoused trans women who are already the most vulnerable. Shelters know how to keep women and trans women safe, they do not need to exclude people to do so. If this committee really cares about protecting women in shelters they should focus their energy on the housing crisis and the harrowing needs facing unhoused people in this state.

I urge the committee to not strip Mainers of additional rights and to vote ought not to pass on these bills. Thank you!