

Hilary Eslinger
Woolwich
LD 1432

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Woolwich, Maine
May 6, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee and provide written testimony. My name is Hilary Eslinger and I am a resident of Woolwich. I am submitting testimony in opposition of the bills before the committee on Thursday, May 8th including LD 1432: An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act

Without trans liberation none of us will be free. When we move within the framework of scarcity, we lose sight of our interconnectedness and dependence on our larger ecosystems. At a time when isolation through the lifespan is prevalent for many, we need to invite our neighbors in, deepen relationships, and recognize their inherent worth just by being alive in this moment. School sports and extra curricular activities for our youth provide a space of belonging. When we allow individuals to identify their preferred gender and access the sports teams, shelters, bathrooms that they identify as safe, we move forward a narrative of inclusion and ensure that everyone is welcomed to access their basic rights: Schooling, shelter, healthcare, and safety.

One in ten transgender people have been evicted from their homes because of their gender identity. The Trevor Project reminds us that homelessness and housing instability were reported at higher rates among transgender and nonbinary youth, including 38% of transgender girls/women, 39% of transgender boys/men, and 35% of nonbinary youth, compared to 23% of cisgender LGBTQ youth. LGBTQ+ young people are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020). The Journal of Adolescent Health, found that transgender and nonbinary youth were 2 to 2.5 times as likely to experience depressive symptoms, seriously consider suicide, and attempt suicide compared to their cisgender LGBTQ peers.

Bills that discriminate against transgender students violate both state and federal constitutional guarantees of equal protection. We have the opportunity to create schools, shelters, and a statewide community that recognize the impact that safety has on our transgender neighbors. Trans and nonbinary youth are less likely to attempt suicide when they are allowed to change legal documents to reflect their gender identity and when their pronouns are respected. Access to school activities and sports significantly reduce the risk for depression and increase well-being among LGBTQ+ young people and young adults. My hope is that our elected leaders in Maine continue to move toward safety and liberation for all of our constituents. We need each other right now and we have the opportunity to expand our hearts and minds, stand against hate, and ensure that all Mainers have the right to basic needs and can thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD 1432.

Hilary Eslinger