

Testimony in opposition to LD 1432:

An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act

Rev. Dr. Allen Ewing-Merrill

Portland, Maine

May 8, 2025

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

I am writing as a Mainer from a long line of Mainers, as a member of the clergy, and as a nonprofit leader in Portland, Maine. As a Christian, as a former high school teacher in Maine, and as a parent of teenagers and young adults, I strongly oppose this bill and all of the anti-trans legislation that you are hearing during this session.

I am blessed to know and care about a number of people from the transgender community. Without exception, they are good and upright people who contribute in significant ways to our communities, who love their families, who work every day to make the world a better place. This bill and the others like it are discriminatory and oppressive. They are built around misrepresentations of people I care about — people created in the image of God and beloved by God — people of sacred worth. In short, they will cause harm to people whom God loves.

Our communities, our neighborhoods, our schools, and our shelters ought to be safe, supportive, and inclusive spaces where every person's humanity and dignity are affirmed, where their rights are protected, and where each person receives the care and support they need while being safe to participate fully and equally in society. This bill and the others like it would create hostile and threatening environments — not only for our trans friends and neighbors, but for everyone. No one benefits from societal structures that promote suspicious and invasive interrogation, that make judgmental assumptions about people's identities, or that aim to exclude, shame, and exercise control through punitive means.

The effect of a bill like this one, if enacted as law, would be to embolden people to target, bully, and harass one another. Amending the Maine Human Rights Act, as proposed, would withdraw civil rights, providing a legal pathway for policing one another, pressuring people to adhere to gender norms, scrutinizing women's and girls' bodies, creating environments of fear, distrust, and division. The impact of this act would be a blatant violation of privacy for all Maine women and girls. Because of this bill and others, my trans friends are living in fear!

Ultimately, this bill perpetuates dehumanizing stereotypes. Biological sex and gender identity are complex, and each individual is unique. When someone has agonized and prayed and carefully discerned their gender identity and has gained clarity and peace, such that they have courageously requested a specific name and gender identity that reflects their truest self, the least that caring adults can do is to honor their dignity and humanity by respecting their identities. These are simple acts of kindness, affirmation, and care — and they literally save lives.

This bill compels us to wrestle with some important questions: As a society, do we want to keep people safe? Do we want to protect and uphold everyone's civil rights? Do we believe that every person is created in God's image and worthy of love and respect? Or is it our goal to advance patriarchal systems, to perpetuate prejudice, to enable discrimination, and to encourage violence and fear? Your vote on this bill will do one or the other.

I am deeply concerned about the ways in which transgender students have been targeted, hatefully, by those who are desperately seeking to advance a broad regressive agenda that would roll back the civil rights of our LGBTQ neighbors, people of color, women, immigrants, and others. My Christian faith tells me that this is morally and ethically wrong — a direct violation of God's call to love our neighbors as ourselves. My faith tells me that upholding the dignity of transgender students, honoring their sacred worth, and celebrating their unique gifts, abilities, perspectives, and contributions is the morally and ethically right thing to do.

Please do the right thing: pledge your opposition to LD 1432. I am praying for you as you deliberate.

Allen Ewing-Merrill
Portland
LD 1432

My written testimony is attached as a PDF document. Thank you for receiving it.