

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: April Fournier, 1241 Washington Ave, Portland ME 04103

Re: Opposition to LD233, LD868, LD1002, LD1134, LD1704

My name is April Fournier and I am a resident of Portland. I am a city councilor in Portland. I serve on the board of the Equality Community Center in Portland. I am also a mother of four incredible children. I want to share with you today a little bit about my son Icarus. He is in school today and unable to be here, but with his permission I wanted to testify here today. Icarus Ehren Gold will be turning 17 in July. Icarus is a twin, he's currently a junior in high school and he is also trans. Icarus was not born male. But as early as kindergarten he began this journey to claim his identity. In elementary school he started to experiment with a different name, cutting his hair shorter and wearing more traditionally masculine clothes. In middle school he started to use different pronouns, first they/them and then transitioning into he/him. And finally in high school he found his name.

This journey for him and for our family was not rooted in any sort of conditioning. It has been very personal, unique and fully his own. What we decided very early on as his parents is that our job was to provide unconditional love, support, understanding and acceptance. He is my child, my blood, my joy. He is strong, he is smart, he is compassionate and a fierce defender of his community and those around him who have been marginalized, attacked or made to feel different simply because their journey to claim themselves isn't what some might consider "traditional".

What Icarus and I also wanted to share about his journey with you today is how difficult this road has been, to dispel some of the myths perpetuated by some, that children, youth and adults would choose this path for some competitive advantage, or because they read a book in their library or because they were being indoctrinated by others. Icarus struggles with his mental health, with depression and neurodiversity. He struggles with community members who don't accept him for who he knows he is, which I believe only he is qualified to identify. He has tried to take his own life twice, because there have been moments for him that it seemed like it would be easier not to exist than navigate the obstacles, adversity and ignorance that others would place on him and others who are trans.

Icarus knows exactly who he is. Not because we, as parents, have told him who to be. Not because society, school, friends or media have told him who to be. Icarus is the only one who lives in his body, who thinks with his mind. For anyone to tell him he doesn't have the right to exist exactly as he is or who he chooses to be is wrong.

As his parent, I am constantly on alert and vigilant to ensure that any medical provider, school staff or others who interact with him understand who he is, use his name and respect his journey. And yes, this includes our own family members. Using his name, using his pronouns and acknowledging him as he is, is a critical component of his mental health and wellbeing.

As his parent I cannot begin to even name the emotion that I have lived through while taking him to the emergency room after a suicide attempt or while holding his hand in the hallway of the emergency department as he underwent mental health crisis care.

What is in front of you, in all of these bills, is a direct attack on my child. On my child's community. And on so many children, youth and adults here in Maine. It is an attack on their autonomy. It is an assumption that they don't know who they are. That others know better about what is going on in their mind and body. That is misguided, harmful and I ask that you oppose all of these harmful bills.