

Pier Franzen
Portland
LD 1704

Pier Franzen, LCPC
Portland, ME
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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 Pier Franzen, I am a clinically licensed mental health professional, and a resident of Portland.

I have spent thousands of hours in therapeutic settings listening to transgender people, and I am a transgender person myself. I am submitting testimony to strongly oppose any legislation that would deny transgender students the right to use restrooms aligned with their gender identity.

Compelling students to use a restroom that doesn't align with their gender identity is a humiliating and stigmatizing act. It send a message to marginalized young people that we do not see or care about who they are, which becomes internalized and has a lifelong impact damaging mental health.

A study published in Pediatrics in 2020 by Turban et al. found that transgender youth who were denied access to gender-affirming restrooms had significantly higher rates of suicide attempts than those whose identities were respected. If we are not listening to marginalized people's lived experienced, or to scientific data, then what are we using for our compass to guide such important decisions? It can be nothing other than fear, misinformation, bias, or hate.

It is unconscionable how many individuals in our communities dread what should be mundane aspects of daily life for fear of harassment or humiliation for needing to use the restroom in a public setting. I have had clients who try to hold it in all day, risking urinary infections and dehydration to avoid harmful encounters.

Allowing transgender youth to use the restroom aligned with their core sense of self is one of the easiest ways we can reduce mental health risk to these youth.

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