

I was born and raised right here in Maine, and I continue to work in the community that raised me. I also grew up believing that anyone was capable of achieving whatever goals they had set for themselves, as long as they had the courage to be themselves and not back down in the face of challenge.

My question here is this:

What are we doing?

Why is this hearing happening here today to discuss whether our children, who have blatantly demonstrated that they have more courage and resilience than I guarantee most of the adults in this space, me included, ever thought to have, should be allowed to be themselves and follow their passions?

Why are we denying our transgender children and our community the opportunities and possibilities that we happily allow other children to pursue?

How can you really feel that these children should be subject to an invasive and potentially traumatizing “gender check” if they are “too tall” or “too strong”? If this had always been the criteria, I’d never have been allowed to use the girls’ restroom or change in the girls’ locker room at school without harassment, simply for the crime of having tall parents who passed that on to me.

I’ve been fortunate enough to meet some incredible transgender individuals in my life, too. One was a teenager who desperately needed support to help him feel like who he was supposed to be. Do you know what that support consisted of?

A name change and a haircut.

A name change and a haircut were all this kid needed to begin to feel seen as the person he has always known he is. Why on earth would we deny our kids a haircut if it makes them feel good about themselves and able to face the world day after day?

Gender affirming care, using correct pronouns, allowing someone the space to be who they are and listening when they tell us who they are...these are all suicide prevention.

I like to think that many of us were raised to stand up to the bully; taught never to back down and to show up for what is right, even if you’re the only one standing. Let’s not teach our children that excluding someone for their differences is somehow better and “safer” than including them for the unique experience and perspective they can bring to our lives, our teams, our schools.

We’ve been down this road so many times, and those who make the choice to tear others down because they are different or because they don’t fit some illogical and dangerous set of rules, never wind up on the right side of history.

Besides, if this whole issue was really about protecting girls and women, perpetuating rape culture with “gender checks” and the denial of a girls’ right to exist fully and safely because she doesn’t fit YOUR criteria, wouldn’t be on the table.