

Julia Elizabeth Stella Gardullo
Lincolntonville, Maine
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Julia Gardullo, and I am a resident of Lincolntonville. I write this as a concerned citizen and a newer resident of Maine who believes deeply in the dignity and autonomy of every human being.

I grew up in a deeply religious environment and witnessed firsthand the devastating effects on children whose identities were suppressed. I saw what happens when young people are told implicitly or explicitly that they must deny their truest selves to be accepted or loved. That harm stays with a person for a lifetime.

I remember meeting someone from the transgender community for the first time. Hearing them describe the discrimination they faced (misgendering, name-calling, physical abuse, and being denied access to gender-affirming care) was heartbreaking. I remember them using duct tape to bind their breasts because they couldn't afford gender-affirming surgery, I remember them being denied jobs, I remember them being grateful anytime someone used their correct pronouns. Being denied resources or common courtesy didn't stop them from being trans; it just jeopardized their safety. It baffles me that anyone could listen to someone describe who they are and still insist on denying their truth. No one, I imagine, would want to be told who they are, especially if it contradicts what they know to be true deep inside. Why would we do that to a child?

As a religious studies major with a focus on early Christianity, I've learned through both scripture and history that gender has not always been the rigid binary we experience today. In fact, early saints and Christian scholars offer us examples of gender diversity and the evolving understanding of identity through the ages. What we define as gender today is, in many ways, a reflection of contemporary power structures and is not an eternal truth.

As a woman and a feminist, I believe that the exclusion of any group leads to the repression of all. My womanhood is something I share; it is not diminished by the existence or affirmation of someone else's identity. When one group is marginalized, we all lose something essential in our shared humanity.

My husband is a teacher, and he sees every day the joy and confidence that arise when a child is simply allowed to be themselves. It benefits us all when we foster environments of acceptance, empathy, and freedom. And yet, here we are spending time, energy, and political will debating whether 1.4% of children should be allowed to exist as themselves. It begs the question: why are

we spending so much time legislating fear and marginalization, when so many other challenges affecting children go unaddressed?

Let me be clear: every credible medical organization in the United States, representing over 1.3 million doctors, supports age-appropriate, gender-affirming care for transgender and non-binary people. This includes the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and the American Psychiatric Association. These organizations are not driven by ideology; they are guided by decades of research, clinical expertise, and a commitment to do no harm.

The data is clear: transgender youth who have access to gender-affirming care experience lower rates of depression and are at significantly lower risk of suicide. Gender-affirming care saves lives.

These bills do not protect children; they politicize their identities. They insert political agendas into deeply personal conversations between children, their parents, and their doctors. Rather than promoting safety, these laws would codify discrimination, limit medical freedom, and endanger vulnerable young people.

Being transgender is not new. Gender-affirming care is not new. What is new is the disturbing rise of efforts to make the existence of transgender youth a cultural battleground for political gain.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on these harmful and unnecessary bills.

Thank you.