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Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am writing to you as a Maine public school teacher of fifteen years. I appreciate your consideration of my testimony. I am writing to implore you to reject the harmful and dangerous bills that target the Trans community of Maine.

An outright ban of the existence of Trans people, which is exactly what these bills promote, protects nobody, and it hurts countless. It hurts me, as a cisgender, heteronormative woman, a teacher, because it massively prohibits my ability to perform my job, to keep my students safe, to help create a welcoming environment in my classroom, to run my school's Civil Rights Team and know that those protections serve every single of my students. How could we consider saying, "Everyone is protected, but not you." These bills tie my hands behind my back and force my Trans students to go into hiding. And my students deserve better than that. They deserve equal protection. They deserve to have it not ripped away from them by their government because some people believe that doing so protects girls.

The bill to remove "Gender Identity and Expression" from the protected Civil Rights groups is a violent attack with a clear message to the people of Maine: "Your government does not care who you are. It does not value you. Despite the fact that biology and science agree that gender is a spectrum, your Maine government will not allow you to exist." I cannot imagine a more dangerous message that Trans youth can hear. And it terrifies me for them.

Gender affirmation saves lives. Gender affirming healthcare saves lives. This is statistically proven. Over half of Trans youth in Maine have considered suicide. Half. When a Trans person has someone in their life who affirms their identity, that number gets lower. If the government steps up and says in a loud, clear voice, "We continue to affirm you. We believe you exist. You are not a threat," imagine the lives that could be saved.

Imagine what could happen if you don't send that message. Please do not do that to my students.

Thank you for your consideration.