

Alice Gouge
Gray
LD 1432

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Alice Gouge. I live in Gray. I am writing in strong opposition to LD 1432: An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act.

This bill is a direct attack on the civil rights of transgender Mainers. It would strip explicit protections for gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act, which has included those protections since 2005. This isn't just a symbolic change—it would send a devastating message that trans people are not fully protected or fully equal under Maine law.

As a woman with transgender friends in and beyond Maine, I can tell you what they have told me: being able to live and work and exist in your community without fear of discrimination is not some abstract legal principle. It is a matter of daily survival. LD 1432 would create uncertainty for trans people in workplaces, schools, housing, health care facilities, and public spaces. It would embolden discrimination and harassment by signaling that the state no longer stands behind all its citizens.

Supporters of this bill may argue that gender identity is already covered under “sex” or “sexual orientation.” But that is a dangerous and misleading claim. Courts have sometimes interpreted “sex” to include gender identity—but not always. That’s why it matters so much that Maine explicitly names gender identity in its civil rights law. It makes protections clear. It makes them enforceable. It tells trans people: “You are seen. You are safe. You are protected.”

Removing that clarity creates confusion not only for the people who are supposed to be protected, but also for schools, employers, landlords, and service providers trying to comply with the law. It opens the door to costly litigation and leaves many people—especially young trans people—wondering whether their rights will be respected at all. As a public school teacher, I can tell you students have enough questions and concerns without worrying about harassment and uncertainty as they grow into their adult selves. Our young people need to self-actualize and anxiety inhibits that for some.

This bill does nothing to solve any real problem. What it does is invite discrimination under the guise of simplification. It’s part of a larger, national campaign to erase and marginalize trans people from public life— a campaign that Maine must firmly reject. I admire Governor Mills for standing up for equality.

There are urgent issues facing our state: lack of affordable housing, hunger, teacher shortages, climate resilience, and health care access. This bill distracts from those issues by targeting one of the most vulnerable communities in Maine. And for what? So That we can pretend trans people don’t exist? That they don’t deserve the same legal protections as everyone else?

Trans people are your neighbors, your coworkers, your students, your patients, your family. We belong here. We have always belonged here. The Maine Human Rights Act recognizes that—and it should stay that way.

I urge you to vote no (Ought not to pass.) on LD 1432. Don’t take Maine backward. Don’t strip away protections from people who desperately need them. Let’s stand together for dignity, fairness, and inclusion.

Thank you.

Alice