

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1432 – An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identify from the Maine Human Rights Act.

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the committee;

My name is Jeffrey Groves. I live in Yarmouth, Maine. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in opposition to the proposed changes to the Maine Human Rights Act that would remove references to "gender identity." This proposed revision would significantly weaken protections for transgender and gender-diverse individuals, leading to increased discrimination and harm.

The inclusion of "gender identity" in anti-discrimination laws is essential to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of how they identify, are treated fairly in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations. Removing these protections would leave transgender individuals vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and exclusion from essential services.

Research has consistently shown that excluding gender identity from legal protections leads to negative outcomes for transgender individuals. According to national health statistics, transgender individuals face significantly higher rates of mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety, when they experience discrimination. Additionally, studies indicate that transgender individuals are more likely to experience homelessness and unemployment due to a lack of legal protections. Additional statistics reflect additional negative outcomes to include:

- **Employment Discrimination:** According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, **63%** of transgender individuals reported experiencing serious acts of discrimination, including job loss due to bias.
- **Housing Discrimination:** Nearly **23%** of transgender individuals faced a catastrophic level of discrimination, including eviction due to bias and homelessness because of their gender identity.
- **Public Perception:** A Pew Research Center survey found that **eight-in-ten** U.S. adults believe transgender individuals face at least some discrimination in society.

Furthermore, data from gender dysphoria research highlights that over 55% of young people with gender dysphoria have reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in recent years. The removal of gender identity protections would exacerbate these disparities, making it harder for transgender individuals to access healthcare, employment, and safe housing.

Currently, 23 states and the District of Columbia explicitly prohibit discrimination based on gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations. These states have recognized that protecting gender identity is a fundamental civil rights issue and have taken steps to ensure that transgender individuals are treated fairly under the law. In Maine, our motto is "Dirigo." Indeed, Maine should continue to lead as one of those 23 states making it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of gender identity.

In summation, the removal of gender identity protections from the Maine Human Rights Act would have devastating consequences for transgender individuals, increasing discrimination and

worsening disparities in mental health, employment, and housing. I urge this committee to reject this proposal and instead reaffirm Maine's commitment to protecting all individuals, regardless of gender identity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.