

Rikki Hallax
Freeport
LD 1704

Testimony LD 1704:

Rikki Hallax
Freeport, ME
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Rikki Hallax, I am a resident of Freeport, and I am writing in opposition of LD 1704: “An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex”.

As a transgender non-binary individual that is masculine presenting, it is a daily challenge to select a restroom when there are only two options available. Regardless of which restroom I choose, there is always the potential to enter a life threatening situation. To some this may sound dramatic, but anytime a transgender individual chooses a bathroom, there is the very real possibility that others in the restroom will react violently should the individual not meet their expectations or possess the physical attributes that are decidedly “male” or “female”. At work, I generally time my bathroom breaks to ensure that I avoid heavy foot traffic to the bathroom, such as avoiding the beginning and end of scheduled break times in the shift when most people generally use the restroom. I walk quickly and avoid direct eye contact with anyone in the restroom for my own safety. I will not engage in conversation with anyone in the restroom, even if I know them and we are friendly. It is truly unsettling that I have come to fear how and when I can access a toilet, and that others may find my presence in a bathroom “uncomfortable” when I am solely there to fulfill a basic human need.

According to an article written by researchers at the Telethon Kids Institute in Australia, school toilets have been identified by SGD (sexuality and gender diverse) students as the least safe spaces within schools. A 2017 survey about the school experiences of 23,001 SGD students in the United States found that almost 43% of students avoided toilets at school due to safety concerns or feelings of discomfort. Although SGD students have reported feeling unsafe in school toilets, toilets are particularly hostile environments for trans and gender diverse (henceforth trans) students, and have been linked to reports of verbal, physical, and sexual assault. Studies also found that 59% of trans adults had avoided toilets at school, work or in public places, with 12% experiencing harassment or assault in toilets, and 31% limiting drinking or eating in order to avoid toilets. Conversely, there have been zero recorded incidents of a SGD person harassing or assaulting a cisgender student in a bathroom. Should we allow LD 1704 to pass, the potential for violence and the lasting impacts of harassment could cause irreparable damage to the children and teens of our communities.

Should gender-segregated restrooms be implemented and enforced in other areas of Maine other than educational institutions, myself and many of my friends and family could be furthermore subjected to harassment and possible assault.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote “Ought not to Pass” on this bill. Thank you!