

[LD 1002](#) *An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate* - Rep. Sheila Lyman of Livermore Falls

Testimony to Maine Legislature Judiciary Committee

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to express my strong opposition to LD 1002, *An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate*.

I am a Mainer, a human rights professional, and the family member and friend of a number of trans individuals, who I love and respect dearly. This bill deliberately and cruelly targets the most basic humanity, worth, and dignity of trans individuals and, what's worse, takes aim at children.

This legislation would mandate that schools refer to students exclusively by the name and gender listed on their birth certificates, unless parents provide written permission or legal documentation of a change. While presented as a measure to protect identification, this bill would have detrimental effects on a very small, vulnerable group of students in Maine—transgender and non-binary youth—by denying them recognition of their affirmed identities within the school environment.

In Maine, the number of students who would be directly affected by this policy is minimal. However, the impact on these individuals would be profound. Forcing students to use names and pronouns that do not align with their gender identity can lead to increased feelings of alienation and distress. According to The Trevor Project's 2023 U.S. National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, 45% of transgender and non-binary youth seriously considered suicide in the past year. Conversely, those who had access to gender-affirming environments, including the use of chosen names and pronouns, reported significantly lower rates of depression and suicidality.

Moreover, policies similar to LD 1002 in other states have led to unintended consequences. For instance, in Indiana, schools have required parental approval for students to use nicknames, affecting even cisgender students who prefer shortened versions of their names. This approach has been criticized for creating unnecessary administrative burdens and for potentially outing transgender students to unsupportive families, thereby putting them at risk of harm.

Implementing LD 1002 could also place Maine schools at odds with established legal protections. The Maine Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, and the Maine Supreme Judicial Court's decision in *Doe v. Regional School Unit 26* (2014) affirmed the rights of transgender students to be recognized in accordance with their gender identity. Enforcing a policy that contradicts these protections could expose schools to legal challenges and undermine the state's commitment to inclusivity.

LD 1002 is a cynical, partisan political effort to leverage vulnerable children for political gain and its enactment would harm the very students it purports to protect. It is essential that our educational policies support all students' well-being and affirm their identities. I respectfully urge the Committee to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1002.

Thank you for your service and consideration of this issue. I respectfully urge the Committee to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1002, and to affirm Maine's longstanding commitment to fairness, legal integrity, and the basic humanity of all our students.