

Dana Leeper
Waterville
LD 1432

As a Conditionally Licensed Clinical Social Worker I support many transgender and non-binary people who identify as a gender separate from what they were assigned at birth. Transgender and non-binary people have been documented in cultures and histories dating back to as early as 5,000 B.C. As of 2025, there are an estimated 1.6 million people ages 13 and older who identify as transgender.

Within my scope of practice I have witnessed many of my transgender and non-binary clients are suicidal until they are accepted by their family, friends, school and ultimately community. Proposed hatred legislation being promoted here today and across the country has trans people being targeted. Trans people are human beings who deserve equal rights.

If any of this proposed legislation is passed it will lead to more discrimination, self harm and suicides. In my experience some children are not yet comfortable to share their preferred name and pronouns with their parents. Children should be allowed to decide what name and pronouns schools use because it is the child's body. I have met many people who knew from a young age they identify as a gender different from how they were assigned at birth. The child may not yet be comfortable to share their preferred gender and pronouns with their family. Thus, school would be the safest place for the child to be themselves. Even if a child is not yet comfortable to discuss their preferred name and pronouns with their parent(s), the risk of a child committing suicide or self harm decreases if a school uses a child's preferred name and pronoun.

Sports in public schools should be for fun and making friends. Many of my transgender clients have few if any friends. Playing a sport is a good way to meet people, be part of something bigger than oneself all while being active. These proposed bills will empower schools to engage in policing adherence to gender norms, which unfairly scrutinizes girls' bodies, and have been shown to affect girls of color even more. These hateful bills will cause fear, distrust, and confusion for students, families, and educators which will ultimately increase the rates of self harm and suicide in trans children. How are these bills that will increase self harm and suicide help children?

Already transgender and intersex people face barriers and discrimination for medical treatment, housing, as well as, employment. People who are transgender are more likely to have experienced intimate partner violence and sexual assault. These bills will be detrimental to trans and intersex people because they are adding more barriers, instead of decreasing discrimination. Additionally, these bills will lead to people feeling the need to hide who they really are which will likely increase the likelihood of self harm or even suicide. Already I have transgender clients who are hiding their preferred gender and pronouns in order to fit in and be accepted. To me I see this person is at higher risk of self harm and suicide because they cannot be their true self.

Gender is a personal identity where people should be supported for who they are as a person. As a society we should be promoting more equality, including in our schools and healthcare. Lastly, if these laws are passed then there would be an increase in women's bodies being overly analyzed, schools will be unsafe for transgender children and there will be an increase in discrimination. In my job I will see higher rates of self harm and suicide, as well as, more transgender people, including children, being less likely to be themselves with their family, as well as, community.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you!