

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Emily MacCabe, and I am a resident of Fayette, Maine. I'm submitting this testimony to express my 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.

This bill would require school personnel to use only the name and gender listed on a student's birth certificate submitted at the time of enrollment unless a parent provides written permission or legal documentation.

I believe this bill is harmful to Maine's young people, particularly those who are transgender or questioning their gender identity. As a parent, I believe school should be a place where all students feel safe, respected, and supported as they grow and learn. For many young people, school is the *only* place where they feel comfortable being themselves. Requiring educators to ignore a student's chosen name or pronouns unless certain documentation is provided puts those students in a painful and sometimes dangerous position.

Sadly, not all students are in environments where they can safely share or express their identity at home. For some, being outed to a parent before they are ready could lead to emotional harm, family rejection, or even abuse. This bill ignores the realities many young people face and risks forcing them to either stay silent or be misgendered daily, an experience that research shows contributes to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

The evidence is clear: using a student's chosen name and pronouns significantly improves their mental health and emotional well-being. National medical and mental health organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association support affirming students' gender identities as a best practice. As a citizen who cares deeply about the health and safety of Maine youth, I believe our laws should reflect that guidance.

This bill does not protect children. It isolates and stigmatizes them. Instead of creating barriers, we should empower educators and school staff to meet students where they are with compassion and respect.

I urge you to vote ought not to pass on this bill. Let's trust our educators to support students with the sensitivity and professionalism they already bring to their work every day. And let's trust our young people to know who they are, even as they are still figuring it out.

Thank you for your time and consideration.