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LD 1704

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Makenna McDevitt, I am a resident of Hancock, and I am writing as a student member of the Ellsworth High School Gender/Sexuality Diversity Alliance. I am writing in opposition of all bills before the committee today.

As a student, I have seen firsthand the effects that anti-trans sentiment has on our community. Students who challenge gender roles are repeatedly ostracized, gossiped about, and even outright harassed both in school and on social media. Girls are already under heavy pressure to be "feminine" enough - to wear makeup, to shave everyday, to have a boyfriend - these are all comments I've personally heard. Inviting further harassment towards students who do not fit into exhausting gender standards opens the gateway to traumatizing "gender checks", further erasure of intersex students, and an increasingly hostile environment for trans students.

As studies have repeatedly shown, while trans students are unjustifiably feared, they are often at the most risk. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey documented the experiences of 27,715 transgender people in the United States, with the Maine State Report of that survey by the Advocates for Trans Equality summarizing the statistics of Maine respondents. According to that report, "80% of those who were out or perceived as transgender at some point between Kindergarten and Grade 12 experienced some form of mistreatment [...] because people thought they were transgender". Furthermore, a 2018 study by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law titled "Gender Identity Nondiscrimination Laws in Public Accommodations: a Review of Evidence Regarding Safety and Privacy in Public Restrooms, Locker Rooms, and Changing Rooms" found no link between trans-inclusive bathroom policies and increased criminal reports in gender-segregated spaces.

The passing of these proposed bills would have a devastating impact on the trans community, furthering the harassment of trans students, punishing divergence from a binary that excludes and alienates trans and intersex people, and creating a hostile environment for all students. In addition, the oppression of one group is a slippery slope towards justification for more discriminatory laws to pass. I stand in strong support with my trans friends at this time, because their rights are the basic dignity any human being is owed, without exception.

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!