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LD 1704

My name is Shawn McMahon and I have been a voting resident of Brunswick, ME for the past 15 years. I am also the parent of a transgendered child. I am writing to implore the legislature to protect all of Maine's young people and to stop allowing our children to be used as pawns in the wider political and cultural battles being fought across the nation. Transgender youth make up a remarkable minority (< 2%) of young people, but they experience mental health challenges, are the victims of violence and sexual violence, and commit self-harm and suicide attempts at rates far higher than their cis-gendered peers. I fear that our actions at the state and federal levels send a message to these young people that they are "less than" human and do not deserve the human rights afforded to all other stripes of humanity. These issues are nuanced and complex. The broad strokes proposed in state and federal legislation equate to a carpet bombing of an issue that requires a much more highly specific and targeted approach. No one should feel unsafe or threatened in our communities, and that goes for cis- and transgendered young people. The only way that will happen though is by having—sometimes difficult—conversations in our schools, places of worship, workplaces, and places of recreation. We need to see each other as humans, each with the same rights and protections under the law. These proposed bills only serve to demonize trans youth and make them the targets of fear and hatred. It casts them as the scapegoats for all that we might view as wrong in our country today. They are children! We must be the adults in the room and show them that, as residents of the great state of Maine, we believe that all human lives matter and that all human lives should share equal protection under the law. Please vote "No" on LAD 233, 868, 1002, 1134, 1704, 1337, 1432, and 380. There is so much other work to be done to improve the lives of all of Maine's residents. Let us not spend so much time and energy vilifying a vulnerable minority of young people in our state.