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LD 868

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Stephanie Nelson, and I'm a resident of Newcastle. I am here in strong opposition to the slate of bills before this committee today LD-1432, LD-263, LD-868, LD-1002, LD-1134, LD - 1704, LD-1337, LD-1432, LD-380.

As someone who served on my local school board for nine years, six of those as board chair, I am deeply disturbed that these bills target school children.

These school related bills seek to exclude, alienate and shame a small vulnerable population of students. These bills are in direct conflict with current state and federal laws that require schools to include and support diverse and disadvantaged students in order to give all students the same opportunities. Transgender students are no different. They deserve the same opportunities and protections as all other students.

These bills go even further and require schools to actively discriminate against transgender students. If I were still on a school board today, I don't know how I could possibly uphold any law that would single out and persecute a single group of children as these bills propose.

Maine values local control of our schools, yet these bills before you would take away local control - our schools' ability to create policies that are in the best interest of our students and community. Along with the threat of withholding funding for not complying, this is complete overreach by state government.

Transgender children are being used as political pawns. I can't imagine any other group of students being targeted and vilified in this way. It's not about sports, it's about using children to marginalize the transgender community.

Our laws need to protect all our children, not harm them. That is why it's so important to keep the Maine Human Rights Act intact. No child or adult should ever be discriminated against because of their identity.

Thank you for allowing me to voice my opinion. I urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on all of the bills before you today.