

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.

My name is Kathy Paradis, and I'm a resident of Freedom, Maine. I'm here today on behalf of myself, as a mother, a Sexual Assault Advocate of 15 years, and the Director of Programming for Hardy Girls, an organization that works with girls and gender-expansive youth across the state. I am here today in strong opposition to LD 1432—and to all of the bills being proposed that target transgender and gender-diverse Mainers.

I'm also the proud mother of a transgender son. I've witnessed the immediate and profound transformation in his mental health, joy, and confidence since coming out and being able to live as his true self. He became lighter. Happier. More connected. More himself.

LD 1432 would remove "gender identity" as a protected class under the Maine Human Rights Act. This would strip away vital legal protections for transgender Mainers in housing, employment, education, healthcare, and public spaces. If passed, this bill would take away my son's legal right to be protected from discrimination—just for being who he is.

Before my current role, my husband and I were family teachers for eight teenage girls, many of whom had experienced serious trauma and were in state custody. I saw how essential it is for young people to have ownership of their identities. When so much has been taken from you, being able to say "this is who I am"—whether it's a name, a pronoun, or how you present—is an act of healing. Removing legal recognition of gender identity threatens that autonomy and does real harm.

And the data backs this up. According to the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, nearly three-quarters of transgender students in our state report experiencing depressive symptoms, and half have seriously considered suicide. Forty-four percent have been bullied at school, and 17% report skipping school because they feel unsafe. These are not distant national statistics—this is what's happening right here, in our own communities.

Instead of supporting policies that address these crises, these bills actively make them worse. They create a climate of fear, suspicion, and shame. They encourage bullying, silence, and self-erasure. And they do nothing to protect anyone.

Maine has long been a place where community, fairness, and compassion matter. These bills—including LD 1432—do not reflect those values. They're part of a broader national effort to erase and exclude transgender people. But here in Maine, we can choose a different path. We can choose to protect all of our kids.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1432—and on all legislation that strips rights and dignity from transgender youth and adults in Maine. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Kathy Paradis
Freedom, ME

Kathleen Paradis
Freedom
LD 380

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