

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton
Portland, ME
May 7, 2025

In Opposition To:

[LD 1704](#): An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex

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

Thank you for taking the time to receive and review this testimony.

I am a voting resident of Portland, Maine, and a religious leader in South Portland, where I serve as the Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ (the Church on Meetinghouse Hill).

I write to oppose the bills before the committee today, which would cause undue harm to transgender students and to school athletic programs in the state of Maine.

The context for my comments is my Christian faith, which teaches me that all people are made in the Divine image, that diversity strengthens our communities and that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Through pastoral and personal relationships with parishioners, colleagues and family members, I routinely witness what scientific data has confirmed: that human sexuality and gender identity exist on a spectrum. We cannot always see what is happening at a biological (chromosomal, cellular or hormonal) level. **We *can* listen to the young people who are living in their own bodies and take their experience seriously.** We can choose to believe them when they tell us that they are transgender, just as we expect our own experience to be believed.

The journey toward claiming a gender other than the one assigned at birth is often an uphill climb. I have watched young people wrestle with the tension between their intuitive sense of themselves and a culturally imposed identity. The number of young transgender people who attempt suicide, including dear ones I can name, is staggering (Among other sources, see www.thetrevorproject.org for related research and statistics). The despair I have witnessed, by those who feel forced into a framework that does not fit them, is heart-wrenching.

This is what is at stake: the *life*, mental health and well-being of young people who are being told by bills like these that they do not exist. Transgender women *are* women, by their own testimony and lived experience. Transgender men are men. If they have chosen the difficult path of claiming their identity in the face of social opposition, if they have been brave enough to stand up and say, "This is what I know about myself," then they should be respected, not isolated or ostracized. They should be trusted to choose a bathroom that corresponds to their lived identify.

As a pastor, I know that honoring the human dignity of individuals is part of cultivating a healthy community. When we respect and seek to learn from each other, value each other's gifts, and support each other in times of trial, the entire community is the better for it.

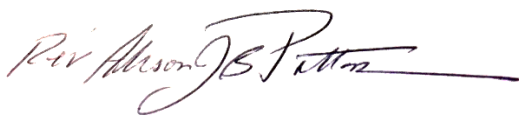
Bills like the ones being discussed today do the opposite: they drive a wedge between students, giving them excuses to distrust one another, as if transgender students were "pretending," rather than expressing their genuine humanity. As such, **all students would be *less safe and less supported should this bill pass*.** Students would all be subjected to increased scrutiny, likely to include invasive physical scrutiny.

Our goal should be to foster school cultures in which all students are affirmed for who they are, have the chance to develop self-confidence in community, and learn to treat one another with dignity. **We can model those commitments in the State of Maine by recognizing and welcoming transgender students.**

To do otherwise is to do harm to our young people and diminish the richness of our wider community.

For these reasons, I am asking you to vote "OUGHT NOT TO PASS" on this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

The Reverend Alison J. Buttrick Patton

Alison Patton
First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in South Portland
LD 1704

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton
Portland, ME
May 7, 2025

In Opposition To: LD 1704

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

Thank you for taking the time to receive and review this testimony.

I am a voting resident of Portland, Maine, and a religious leader in South Portland, where I serve as the Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ (the Church on Meetinghouse Hill).

I write to oppose the bills before the committee today, which would cause undue harm to transgender students and to school athletic programs in the state of Maine.

The context for my comments is my Christian faith, which teaches me that all people are made in the Divine image, that diversity strengthens our communities and that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Through pastoral and personal relationships with parishioners, colleagues and family members, I routinely witness what scientific data has confirmed: that human sexuality and gender identity exist on a spectrum. We cannot always see what is happening at a biological (chromosomal, cellular or hormonal) level. We can listen to the young people who are living in their own bodies and take their experience seriously. We can choose to believe them when they tell us that they are transgender, just as we expect our own experience to be believed.

The journey toward claiming a gender other than the one assigned at birth is often an uphill climb. I have watched young people wrestle with the tension between their intuitive sense of themselves and a culturally imposed identity. The number of young transgender people who attempt suicide, including dear ones I can name, is staggering (Among other sources, see www.thetrevorproject.org for related research and statistics). The despair I have witnessed, by those who feel forced into a framework that does not fit them, is heart-wrenching.

This is what is at stake: the life, mental health and well-being of young people who are being told by bills like these that they do not exist. Transgender women are women, by their own testimony and lived experience. Transgender men are men. If they have chosen the difficult path of claiming their identity in the face of social opposition, if they have been brave enough to stand up and say, "This is what I know about myself," then they should be respected, not isolated or ostracized. They should be trusted to choose a bathroom that corresponds to their lived identity.

As a pastor, I know that honoring the human dignity of individuals is part of cultivating a healthy community. When we respect and seek to learn from each other, value each other's gifts, and support each other in times of trial, the entire community is the better for it.

Bills like the ones being discussed today do the opposite: they drive a wedge between students, giving them excuses to distrust one another, as if transgender students were "pretending," rather than expressing their genuine humanity. As such, all students would be less safe and less supported should this bill pass. Students would all be subjected to increased scrutiny, likely to include invasive physical scrutiny.

Our goal should be to foster school cultures in which all students are affirmed for who they are, have the chance to develop self-confidence in community, and learn to treat one another with dignity. We can model those commitments in the State of Maine by recognizing and welcoming transgender students.

To do otherwise is to do harm to our young people and diminish the richness of our wider community.

For these reasons, I am asking you to vote "OUGHT NOT TO PASS" on this bill.

Respectfully, Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton