

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

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

In Opposition To:

- [LD 1337](#): An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters
- [LD 1432](#): An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act
- [LD 380](#): An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services

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 harm to transgender residents and to our wider Maine state communities.

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 those 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 transgender parishioners, colleagues and friends 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 wellness of Maine residents 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.

I have seen the pain and suffering that result when a person's humanity is dismissed by neighbors or denied by the laws of the land. So, too, have **I seen the flourishing that is possible, when we extend legal protections, health care and social support to all our Maine residents**, without discrimination.

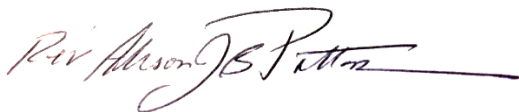
As a pastor, I know that *that* flourishing benefits all of us. Honoring the human dignity of our neighbors helps us to cultivate a healthy community. When we value one another, celebrate our varied gifts and bear each other up in times of trial, the entire community is the better for it.

The State of Maine is a leader in this respect. **Our Maine Human Rights Act stands as a model for healthy community, protecting the rights and wellbeing of all our residents, regardless of gender identity.**

To dilute or remove those protections would be to deny the humanity of some residents and diminish the richness of our Maine communities.

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

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Rev. Allison 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 1337

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Respectfully, Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton