

MARIAH RICHARDS

Hope

LD 868

Testimony in regards to the inhumane and unjust bills: LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, LD 1704, LD 1337, LD 1432, and LD 380.

I am a fluvial geomorphologist with a background in river restoration and dam removal. I have seen the impacts of channelizing and constraining rivers into a shape that they are not meant to fit. It takes the life out of them. Across the country we are now addressing our impacts to rivers: restoring their connectivity and watching as formerly lifeless waterways rebound with migrating fish, flourishing riparian vegetation, and healthier, cleaner waters.

Constraining any being, human or otherwise, to fit into a container or label that they do not feel they fit into, is inhumane and unhealthy. Invoking the legal system to further confine them and increase their exposure to harm is cruel.

Our children need the support to explore, find creativity, and expand as they flow into adulthood. They need boundaries, yes, but around what truly matters: empathy, respect, connection, and generosity. Not arbitrary legal constraints meant to assuage the discomfort of adults who are not comfortable in their own bodies and thus inclined to legislate someone else's.

These bills make no one safer. They would intensify bullying between students, and between authority figures and students. They would require inappropriate and invasive "gender checks" increasing all girls exposure to traumatizing harassment. They would be a step towards Maine bending to the will of an authoritarian regime who are wielding these issues as a distraction from the tangible deterioration of democracy and our planet.

These bills are a great danger to us all. May we reduce the damage we are doing to each other now so that our efforts of reconnecting and restoring our humanity are not so daunting in the future.