

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

From: Carrie Sherman, Maine resident, Kittery Point, Maine 03905

Re: Bills regarding Trans Students in Maine schools, hearing to be held May 8

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the committee to consider. I am here in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

As an educator at a nearby community college, many of my students were allies of or part of the transgender community. Talking with them and reading their essays was very enlightening for me. I developed great compassion and respect for them. As well, at my church, transgender people have the courage and feel accepted to participate actively in our services. I am deeply grateful to them for sharing their stories. As a result, I have become more comfortable and skilled as a teacher in regards to the transgender community. I was also able to model that behavior for my students. It didn't take long to achieve this, and it wasn't hard.

For me, it comes down to this: the reality of being transgender has been around since time began. We are merely accepting this reality. Many cultures always have.

A 2018 Scientific American article examined recent research regarding DNA and the ongoing development of sexual orientation and gender identity as a person matures. Author Claire Ainsworth, quotes Eric Villain, a clinician and the director of the Center for Gender-Based Biology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He notes: "It has been, in a sense, a philosophical change in our way of looking at sex; that it's a balance. It's more of a systems-biology view of the world of sex."

Let's not burden our educational communities with divisive, punitive laws that create finger-pointing and shame. Girls are already unduly vulnerable to stereotypes about their bodies given the ongoing blast of social media. Adolescents in general are having a rough time trying to catch up educationally after the pandemic.

What we want in our schools are strong, supportive communities. We want to teach our students well and give them critical skills to succeed as adults. Students learn best when they are treated fairly and respectfully.

One of my last years of teaching, the women's basketball team had a really great season. Their magnificent playing totally galvanized the school. Everyone showed up at their games and the cool hoodies emblazoned with the school's mascot just about sold out. Everyone agreed, the team's success was all about teamwork.

As for differences, with the support of strong communities, these students work it out. They're good kids.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to pass" on these bills. Thank you.

Carrie Sherman
Kittery Point
LD 233

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