

LD 1337: An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am David Souers, living in Friendship, Maine. I am retired after a long career with my own firm practicing healthcare architecture designing clinics, hospitals, psychiatric facilities and specialty centers for women's health, maternity, surgery, cancer, dialysis and dentistry. My wife, Linda Souers joins me in this testimony. Linda is a retired art teacher, business manager and not-for-profit community board member. Linda and I are parents of three adult women, all of whom played sports from grade school through highschool. All three have careers in health and healthcare.

We are testifying in opposition to LD 1337 for the reasons, which we explain below. We also are in opposition to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1432, LD 380, LD 1134 and LD 1704 for all the reasons here and our other testimonies on these bills. But first, how do these proposed bills comply with the 2005 amendment to the MHRA which expanded the definition of "sexual orientation" to include "gender identity" and expression, which marked a significant step in ensuring equal treatment under the law?

1. This bill would exempt privately owned shelters providing emergency service to women from anti-discrimination requirements as detailed in the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA). This bill also amends the MHRA to align with Federal Title IX analysis related to rights of female athletes.
2. I met a 70+ year old woman at the State House recently who was here to support transgender people along with State and Federal workers. She explained that she had spent 30 years in foreign service and that she was transgender. If she had not told me, I would not have known. Would the Legislature want to allow a privately owned shelter to turn this woman away? How would they know to turn her away? Would they accept her and then learn something that turns this woman out?
3. Doesn't an emergency shelter have a moral responsibility to admit and assist anyone they can service those that they have the facilities and staff to care for?
4. Why would Maine want to water down our MHRA and provide our citizens with less protection?

Rather than write bills without any scientific, medical or psychological expertise to support them, we advocate that LD 233, 868, 1002, 1337, 1432, 380, 1134, and 1704 all ought not to pass. And, that the legislature establish a study involving representatives from the state's public education groups including effective legal advice on gender law, administrators, classroom teachers, gym & sports coaches, school nurses along with professionals in the area of gender, adolescent and young adult medicine and psychology with experience in transgender study and care.

Thank you for your attention.

David & Linda Souers
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