

Rachel Spencer-Reed  
New Gloucester  
LD 1704

Rachel Spencer-Reed, New Gloucester, ME

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

Thank you for accepting public testimony today. My name is Rachel Spencer-Reed, I am a resident of New Gloucester, and I am here today in opposition of the bills before the committee today, including LD 1704. This bill would prohibit schools from creating policies allowing students to use a bathroom if that bathroom does not correspond to the student's sex assigned at birth.

This bill will cause unnecessary harm to transgender, nonbinary, and intersex students, as well as add to the stress of using the bathroom at school for all students. My transgender friends and family members (just like my cisgender friends and family members) need to be able to use the restroom that they feel is safest for them in any given situation. Bathroom bans like these focus enormous time, hate, and resources on a non-existent issue. School bathrooms need to be clean and safe for all students, period. No student - cisgender or transgender - should be questioned about whether their gender "matches" the sign on the bathroom door. As long as students are behaving safely and respectfully, they should just be able to attend to their bodily needs in the bathroom that feels safest to them and get back to class. Bathroom bans like this are unconstitutional and constitute discrimination on the basis of sex and gender identity under Maine Human Rights law.

Schools should be a safe and welcoming place for all students. I have spent my career working with vulnerable and housing-insecure children, youth, and families. While many families are loving and welcoming to their LGBTQIA+ children, there are still many who reject their children or whose children feel they must stay closeted or risk being kicked out on the streets. According to Chapin Hall's national research, 1 in 30 youth ages 13-17 in the United States will experience at least one night of homelessness each year. This bill could increase the likelihood of schools outing transgender youth to unsupportive and potentially abusive parents. It also makes school an even more difficult experience for trans youth who already disproportionately experience bullying, depression, anxiety, and suicidality at higher rates compared to their cisgender peers.

Maine should not be in the business of legislating discrimination that can increase youth homelessness or make school a less welcoming or more dangerous place for any student. This bill is creating a problem rather than fixing one.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I strongly urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on LD1704 and the rest of the bills being considered that would increase discrimination in Maine's schools (LD 233; LD 868; LD 1002; LD 1134).

Thank you.