

Althea Turner
Portland
LD 1002

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Althea Turner and I am a resident of Portland and a licensed masters-level social worker in the state of Maine. I am here today in strong opposition to the bills presented before the committee today.

I have the privilege of serving a large population of young Mainers as a social worker in a public high school. I witness the incredibly harmful effects of anti-trans sentiment on my students every day. The students I serve have reported feeling hopelessness and despair after reading about legislation that seeks to erase their rights. I have counseled too many transgender and gender non-conforming students who believe that dying by suicide is a better alternative to living in a world where they cannot be themselves. We are already facing an epidemic of suicidality amongst our young Mainers; how can we possibly pass legislation that would increase those numbers?

The data confirms what I see every day in my office. According to a 2024 study by Lee et al., suicide attempts by transgender and nonbinary teens rose up to 72% in the years following the passage of anti-transgender laws in 19 states. That is unacceptable. Even one death by suicide is too many. Our young Mainers deserve to live, and live with dignity. As a mental health professional, I cannot stand by any legislation that has the potential to increase suicidality amongst our youth.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective with the committee. I urge you to protect the lives of the incredible young people in our state and vote "Ought not to pass" on all of these bills. Thank you.

Lee, W. Y., Hobbs, J. N., Hobaica, S., DeChants, J. P., Price, M. N., & Nath, R. (2024). State-level anti-transgender laws increase past-year suicide attempts among transgender and non-binary young people in the USA. *Nature Human Behaviour*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-01979-5>