

Rabbi Lisa Vinikoor
Bath, ME
May 8, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning.
My name is Rabbi Lisa Vinikoor and I am a resident of Bath.

I am here as a concerned citizen, as a Jew, and a rabbi, guided by the enduring values of my Jewish faith to stand in strong opposition to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, LD1704, LD 1337, LD 1432, LD380.

I am also here as a friend, family member, teacher and community leader, who has witnessed firsthand the life changing importance of love, acceptance and affirmation of transgender and gender expansive individuals.

I want to be very clear, as a representative of my faith tradition, and reflecting on the overwhelming stance of the Reform Jewish Movement, we unequivocally support the rights, dignity and well-being of transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive people, including and especially transgender youth.

This support is not in spite of our religious convictions, but *because* of them. For us, affirming transgender individuals is a matter of religious integrity and a core expression of our Jewish values¹.

My faith has a long and well documented history of understanding gender beyond the simple male-female binary. The Mishnah, a foundational text compiled nearly 2000 years ago, describes not two but at least six different genders². This is just one example of many to show that for Jews, seeing gender as more than the binary is not a new idea, it is in fact very ancient to our understanding of humanity and the reason we fight so hard to protect and preserve human dignity³.

Judaism teaches that every human being is created in the image of God and that each and everyone of us has a spark of divinity inside of our very being. As a person of deep faith and religious values, I am obligated to act on these values and stand up against these hateful, discriminatory, humiliating and regressive bills that represent an existential threat to the health,

¹ Thank you to Rabbi Daniel Bogard for assisting me in writing this testimony.

² Mishnah Bikkurim 4:1-5 and Mishnah Yevamot 8:6

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/18/opinion/trans-teen-suicide-judaism.html>

lives, dignity, and well-being of transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse people, including youth and adults in the communities I serve⁴.

I ask you this morning to stand on the side of compassion and understanding.

I urge you to not legislate based on one particular religious viewpoint especially when it means harming vulnerable children and violating the religious freedom of those who believe, as our Jewish tradition teaches, in affirming and supporting them.

I ask to use your power to build a world in which *all* our children can grow up knowing that this great state values them, protects them, and allows them to be themselves, embraced by their faith and their families.

I strongly urge you to vote “ought **not** to pass” on these harmful bills.

Thank you.

⁴<https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-resolutions/central-conference-of-american-rabbis-resolution-on-advocating-for-trans-gender-people/>

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LD 1134

Attached please find my testimony in strong opposition.