

Kale Vonderau
Corinth
LD 868

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Corinth, Maine
May 8th, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Kale Vonderau, I am a resident of rural Corinth and writing to you on behalf of myself, trans youth, and trans people that I love and cherish in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

As a trans non-binary person, a Deacon for an open and affirming church, and an advocate for queer youth, I have first-hand experience on what it is like to exist as a trans adult in a country where our representatives are attempting to further strip away our rights. These bills will cause irreparable mental and physical suffering to trans youth and adults. As leaders it is your responsibility to cultivate safety and provide legislation that promotes unity and uplifts our communities. We should be facilitating a space for young trans citizens to participate in sports and build camaraderie with their teammates, find commonalities between them despite their differences, and learn how to understand each other's experiences so they can grow into well-rounded adults. Trans and queer people are not going anywhere despite the many anti-trans bills before you today. These bills will make our lives more unbearable and set a precedent that only those who fall within the limited ideas of how a person should be are given rights and freedoms.

As a child and into early adulthood, I experienced severe bullying and suffered multiple suicide attempts because I was perceived as queer, different, and thus must be tormented. Trans youth are especially vulnerable to bullying, mental health problems, and increased suicide rate tied to anti-trans legislation by up to 72%, as published in the Nature Human Behaviour peer-reviewed journal in 2024. These situations are prevalent in our youth not because they are trans, but because of the ruthless and inhumane ways our legislators scapegoat them and model for the rest of the world that it is ok to treat trans people as less than. The hardships I experienced are what brought me here today. I now live an authentic life full of joy, love, and compassion. One in which my authenticity is met with acceptance and because of that I am a flourishing member of my church and community. What a difference support, autonomy, and acceptance can make.

These bills are offering us two choices: one based on autonomy and one on control. Controlling how people choose to identify and express themselves, how to live their lives, and how they choose to show up in their school and the communities they belong to. These are our children, they are our future. Are you going to choose to embrace them, embolden them to figure out who they are, be successful citizens, teach them that being themselves is a gift, and heal our nation? I strongly encourage you to vote against these harmful bills, and to think about the people you love most in this world. Imagine them in a position that these bills are putting trans Americans in, to be torn apart from the outside in, to be ridiculed and belittled, to other them, and have their rights stripped away from them piece by piece. Then think about how you could be a deciding factor in preventing these horrors from happening. Please vote with compassion and start investing back into our future and in the name of humanity, thank you for your time.