

Judiciary Committee of the Maine Legislature
May 8, 2025

RE: [LD 1432](#): An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act, [LD 1337](#): An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters, [LD 380](#): An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services (amended version)

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

My name is Julia Colpitts. I am an old Mainer living on the land I grew up on in Buxton Maine. I am here today to embody the values of freedom and commitment to human rights that spring from that land and reflect the reasons my ancestors arrived in the late 1700's in full flight from religious and social persecution to find tolerance and freedom.

I deeply respect the process that allows us all to be here to speak with you. The freedom to voice and live one's truth authentically is at the core of our nation and of Maine.-I am here today in opposition to the bills before this committee, which conflict with those basic human rights.

As I drove up today, I wondered what it would be like to be 75 (my age) and only have to worry about my part time job and having time to spend with family, friends and my garden, instead of coming here to defend my gentle, loving trans daughter's right to exist— and praying for her safety each night.

In my lived experience with my trans child and her friends, I hear directly of the mental health impact on trans youth and adults who are forced to deny their nature or live frightened at the rage that is directed toward them. That awareness of that negative impact is deepened in my current professional work teaching the neurobiology of child and adolescent trauma to graduate social work students, including trans students.

However, it is my experience as a former executive director of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence and then a deputy director of the National Network to End Domestic Violence that most influences my comments today. One of my national responsibilities was to facilitate the national DV shelter system acceptance of trans women victims in "women's" shelters, including in the deep red states. What I thought would be problematic was not. Survivors know what it means to be a survivor. Once they got past the superficial differences, they quickly understood they had much more in common than different.

However, while I understand victims, I really know bullies.

Unfortunately, history is clear that that impulse to hurt and harm in order to feel powerful oneself and to distract one from the real fears of the age, is intrinsically human. It raises its ugly head from time. That impulse unchecked has brought us witches to burn, the inquisition, the holocaust and as our own state senator King noted: the McCarthy era. The list goes on and on.

While the target of bullying changes, the dynamics are the same. Since logical thought is literally blocked in the brain when threat responses run high, this strategy works best in a time of fear and uncertainty.

- single out a group of people different from the mainstream with relatively little power and then exaggerate those differences;
- convince people, regardless of the facts, that these “others” are dangerous;
- encourage them to replace their fear with the immediate sense of power that rage and inflicting pain gives them;
- manipulate that fear and rage, couple it with enough aggression so that you scare away potential defenders
- dress that ugly impulse up in a layer of rationalization so people can feel good about it—false facts, religiosity, a lie of protection;
- then, use the chaos to your own political advantage.

Luckily, humans have a countering impulse of compassion. When stressed, stronger people find their power in joining together to help and defend others. It is our privilege and responsibility to understand the real dynamics of power held in bullying and to nip it in the bud....and to affirm its counterpart.

It really is that simple—and everything else is downstream from that decision we make under stress—to help or to harm. Are we bullies or are we protectors and caretakers of the vulnerable?

We decide what we feed in our culture--and then we get the culture that is built on that choice.

The majority of people believe that transgender citizens deserve the same rights as other Americans. 77% say that LGBTQ issues are a distraction from the real issues we face. You have the chance to send a clear message that we are moving on to the real issues that need addressing, in a framework of tolerance, compassion and human rights.

No bullying allowed.

Respectfully submitted.

Reference citations:

- Injustice At Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Identifying the intersection of trauma and sexual orientation and gender identity. <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/identifying-the-intersection-of-trauma-and-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-key-considerations>
- 2022 US Trans Survey: <https://ustranssurvey.org/>
- The Gender Policy Report 2023: <https://genderpolicyreport.umn.edu/american-attitudes-toward-transgender-rights/>