

Stephanie Joy, MD

Freeport, Maine

14 April 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Dr. Stephanie Joy, I am a resident at Freeport, and though I am a primary care pediatrician in southern Maine, I am here on behalf of myself and not representing my employer. I am vehemently opposed to the proposed ballot measure LD 2239. I am opposed to this measure in four ways: As a pediatrician, as a parent, as the parent of a transgender child, and as a human being and proud citizen of the state of Maine.

1. **As a pediatrician:** In my practice, I see many gender diverse and gender nonconforming youth. The data are staggering and consistent. Children who do not identify as cisgender have dramatically increased rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and completed suicides. Gender diverse and gender nonconforming individuals have a 61% lifetime risk of suicidal ideation and a 31% lifetime risk of suicide attempt, as compared to 20% lifetime risk of suicidal ideation and 7% lifetime risk of suicide attempt in their cisgender peers. In our state in 2023 (according to MIYHS data), 51.6% of transgender high school students seriously considered suicide and 28.4% attempted suicide over the previous 12 months (as opposed to 15.5% and 6.6% of cisgender peers). This is appalling and largely preventable. It has been shown that something as simple as having one supportive adult in their lives can reduce these risks. Gender affirming care also reduces these risks. It is our responsibility as adults in this state to ensure Maine's children receive the highest level of evidence-based care possible.
2. **As a parent:** I had a difficult adolescence so I thought I would be well poised to guide my children through this time in their lives. Spoiler alert: I am not. It is one of the hardest things to see my children struggle and not be able to fix their problems, whatever they might be or how trivial they may seem. All I can do is make sure they have the correct information and my support to make choices that will help them succeed. It is my responsibility as a parent

to not make the choices for them, but to support them in the way they need to be supported (and not how I want to support them).

3. **As the parent of a transgender child:** My youngest has many of the same issues his older brother and sister have, like hoarding cups in his bedroom (WHY?!?!), not loving homework, and having to navigate the exponential uptick in friend drama in middle school. He also has, however, bigger problems that should not be his to carry. He came out as trans when he was in first grade and has been steadfast ever since. He doesn't want to be a poster child for trans youth. He honestly doesn't even think about himself as trans sometimes: he is a boy. He doesn't want to talk about it, he doesn't want to have to discuss his genitals with all of his friends (any of them, actually), he just wants to live his life. I never once mentioned to the parents of my older son or daughter that they had a penis or a vagina when they went over for playdates, how is this relevant otherwise? I think it is safe to say that no parent anywhere would want school staff, teachers, or coaches inspecting or discussing their childrens' genitals. EVER. My son voluntarily began using the boys bathroom when he was 6. Let me tell you, if nothing else convinces you that being transgender is not a choice, it is opting to spend time in a restroom used by middle school boys. There might not be anything grosser on the planet. He plays soccer and runs track. He leads two different campaigns in his school's Dungeons and Dragons club. He loves animals, science, reading, and being outside. He is smaller than everyone else and always will be, but he doesn't care because he just wants to be himself. It is my responsibility as his parent to use my voice to speak up for him and other kids like him. I am also acutely aware that the time will come when he does not want me speaking up for him or when it will no longer be safe for me to speak up for him because of the normalization of abject hatred around this issue.
4. **As a human being and proud citizen of the state of Maine:** We aren't all doctors, we aren't all parents, we don't all have transgender children, but we are all human beings and we all owe each other the same respect. My family has been embraced by our extended family and our community, but I know this experience is not the same for all gender diverse youth. This is not a political issue. This is a human rights issue. All three of my children have the right to be kept safe by the adults in their lives. This is our chance to make that happen. It is our responsibility as adults in this state, in the legislature, in medicine, in the voting body, to protect ALL children, regardless of gender identity.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration in this matter.

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