

Sarah Lentz
Portland
LD 2239

Sarah Lentz
Portland, Maine
April 13, 2026

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Sarah Lentz, and I am both a parent and serve as the Chair of the Board for the Portland Public Schools. I am writing to strongly oppose LD 2239.

In public education, we are responsible not only for academic outcomes, but for the safety and wellbeing of every student entrusted to our care. That responsibility requires us to be guided by evidence, by the lived realities of young people, and by a clear commitment to do no harm. By those standards, LD 2239 falls short.

The data is unequivocal. According to The Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide as their peers. A majority report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and far too many lack access to safe, affirming environments. These are not abstract statistics—they reflect the real conditions facing students in our schools today.

Equally clear is what helps. The Trevor Project's research shows that affirming environments—where students are respected, supported, and able to be themselves—significantly reduce the risk of suicide. Access to even one accepting adult can dramatically improve outcomes. Inclusive policies and practices are not political statements; they are evidence-based interventions that save lives.

LD 2239 moves us in the wrong direction. Regardless of its intent, it risks creating confusion, fear, and barriers to support for some of our most vulnerable students. In schools, even subtle signals of exclusion can have outsized consequences. When students feel unsafe or unseen, their ability to learn, to engage, and to thrive is compromised.

As policymakers, you have a responsibility to weigh not only intent, but impact. The likely impact of this bill is to undermine the very conditions that keep students safe and able to succeed. That is a risk we cannot afford to take.

We should be strengthening the systems that protect student wellbeing—not introducing policies that jeopardize them. I urge you to reject LD 2239 and instead support approaches that are grounded in research, compassion, and a clear-eyed understanding of what our students need.

The stakes are not theoretical. For some students, they are life and death.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to express my thoughts to the committee.

Sincerely,
Sarah Lentz
Chair of the Board