

Sarae Pacetta  
Portland  
LD 2239

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

My name is Sarae Pacetta, I'm a resident of Portland, and I am opposed to the proposed ballot measure LD 2239. I am an educator with both my Bachelor's and Master's in early childhood education, I have been an adjunct professor of early childhood development and curriculum at Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development, and I have taught young children since 1997. I am also a parent of an 18 year old, who told us as a preschooler that they were "both a boy and a girl." Between my work as an educator in schools and my experience as a parent of a non-binary trans child, I have deep knowledge and expertise about creating school environments of inclusion and belonging, about what transgender children are up against in schools, and why it is critical that schools are places of belonging. Throughout their prek-12 experience, my child has needed to find bathrooms that are safe for them. They have been threatened in both girls' and boys' bathrooms because others didn't think they belonged. They have never been a threat to anyone in any bathroom. They have needed to find sports teams that are welcoming, that recognize them as someone who deserves an opportunity for teamwork, physical development and competition. I have seen firsthand as a teacher and a parent that including transgender children does not harm cisgender children, and it allows a typical childhood for trans kids. All children deserve a childhood in which they feel normal and can focus on playing, making friends, and learning.

We moved from Ohio to Maine when our child started middle school so that we could be in a state that protected these basic needs. Trans kids want nothing other than to belong. They don't want to make others uncomfortable, to harass, to assault others. We already have rules against those behaviors for all students, we don't need separate rules that single out transgender children. The National Institutes of Health report that transgender and nonbinary youth experience significantly higher suicide attempt rates (30%–51%) compared to their cisgender peers (5%–11%). Including trans youth, rather than ostracizing them, is critical for mental health.

I am so afraid of what a repeal to the Maine Human Rights Act would do to already vulnerable children, and I implore you to help Maine remain a state that protects all of our children, including trans and nonbinary children.

Thank you for taking the time with my written testimony, and for taking seriously our charge to protect all of our children.

Sincerely,  
Sarae Pacetta