



## Testimony before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

LD 1196: An Act to Require Public Schools to Allow Parents and Guardians to Opt Out Their Children with Respect to Portions of the Curriculum

LD 1199: An Act to Provide Transparency in Public School Curricula

LD 1589: Resolve, Directing the Dept of Education to Adopt Rules Prohibiting Teachers from Engaging in Political, Ideological and Religious Advocacy in the Classroom

LD 1129: An Act to Enact the Curriculum Transparency Act

LD 1518: An Act Regarding the Rights of Parents to Withdraw Their Children from Public School Classes or Activities That Include Certain Controversial Viewpoints

LD 1643: An Act Regarding Instructional Materials, Surveys, Analyses, Evaluations and Events at Public Schools

LD 1800: An Act Regarding Parental Rights in Education

May 11, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches. The Council has seven mainline Protestant member-denominations and two associate member congregations who represent 437 local churches in Maine with 55,000 parishioners in their care. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in OPPOSITION to the seven bills listed above.**

All of the MCC churches have roots in Hebrew and Christian scripture, where the foundation of morality is love of neighbor as self and where covenant with God includes caring for the most vulnerable and marginalized of our neighbors, including and especially our LGBTQ+ siblings who are beloved children of God, created in the divine image. We believe sexual orientation and gender identity are a gift from God—not a condition that needs treatment, not a choice that needs conversion, not something broken that needs repair, not a sin that needs forgiveness, and certainly not a category of neighbors that others are permitted to discriminate against, silence, or claim that their children need to be “protected” or “shielded” from.

Among us on the Council’s Board of Directors are three members of the LGBTQ community and several parents of LGBTQ sons and daughters; in the pulpits and pews of our 437 congregations are cherished colleagues and parishioners who are LGBTQ.

We focus on the LGBTQ community in our testimony in opposition to these bills because, despite some of the bill titles, it is clear they are not really about parents’ rights or education. They are about surveillance and dismantling public education. They are about attacking transgender people and other marginalized groups and using hatred and bigotry to exploit a vulnerable population in a quest for winning political points. They are about denying students’ rights, including the right to privacy and safety.

As people of faith, we are impelled by the example of Jesus to treat all persons with love and dignity and especially to care for those who are marginalized by society. The Maine Council of Churches stands opposed to these bills and urges you to vote OUGHT NOT TO PASS.