Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
May 8, 2025

In opposition to:

LD 1337 **An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters**
LD 1432 **An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act**

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

I am Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the **Maine Council of Churches**, a coalition of seven Protestant denominations with more than 400 congregations in Maine that have over 50,000 parishioners.

You heard this morning about the Council's values and beliefs and our denominations' **love and support for our transgender and nonbinary siblings**. So it's no surprise that the Council **opposes passage of the bills before you.**

Nondiscrimination laws protecting transgender people have existed for a long time, in some cases, decades. Over 200 municipalities and 18 states have nondiscrimination **laws protecting transgender people's access to facilities consistent with the gender they live every day. These laws have protected people from discrimination without creating harm.** None of those jurisdictions have seen a rise in sexual violence or other public safety issues due to nondiscrimination laws.

As someone who has worked in domestic violence shelters in two states, I know there is no one more vulnerable than women—including trans women—in need of emergency shelter and in fear for their own safety. In fact, transgender women experience some of the highest rates of housing insecurity, harassment and violence among women in Maine. **Turning away some of our most vulnerable neighbors from shelters when they need help the most would put them at risk for exactly the type of mistreatment and abuse that shelter services are intended to prevent.**

Just as the "safety" issue was a red herring in the bills we testified on this morning, it is here, too. In 2018, a coalition of more than 300 domestic violence and sexual violence organizations in the United States (including those here in Maine) signed a National Consensus Statement agreeing that **transgender women being sheltered alongside other women is appropriate and not a safety issue**. They wrote, "We speak from experience and expertise when we state that these claims [about transgender women residents posing a safety risk to cisgender women residents] are false." **Discriminating against transgender people does nothing to decrease the risk of sexual assault**.

Those who perpetuate falsehoods about transgender people and nondiscrimination laws are putting transgender people in harm's way and making no one safer. The needs of survivors, both those who are transgender and those who are not, are obscured in order to push a political agenda.

We here in Maine must **stand up to national political efforts to interfere with our rights to make and abide by our own laws**, including the Maine Human Rights Act which has included protections for gender identity for the past 20 years. **Passing bills like the ones before you today would represent capitulation and open the door for further attacks on Mainers' civil rights.**

You know what it wouldn't do? Make Maine more safe or fair for anyone.

Please vote "OUGHT NOT TO PASS" on these bills.