

TESTIMONY OF JEAN VERMETTE
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 1589
TO THE
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY
APRIL 23, 2007

SENATOR DIAMOND, REPRESENTATIVE GERZOFKY, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

GOOD AFTERNOON. MY NAME IS JEAN VERMETTE, I'M FROM BANGOR, AND I AM A POST-OPERATIVE TRANSSEXUAL WOMAN.

I AM SPEAKING TODAY IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED BILL LD 1589 (AN ACT TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF OPPOSITE-GENDER BATHROOMS, CHANGING ROOMS, AND LOCKER ROOMS). I AM AGAINST THIS BILL FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, BUT THIS AFTERNOON I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU JUST TWO OF THEM WHICH HAVE MOVED ME TO SPEAK TO YOU.

1. THE FIRST IS THAT, AS A TRANSSEXUAL PERSON, I FEEL THIS BILL IS SIMPLY UNNECESSARY.

ABOUT A MONTH AGO I WAS IN BAR HARBOR FOR THE DAY AND DURING THAT TIME I WENT TO EAT AT ONE OF THE BETTER-KNOWN RESTAURANTS IN TOWN. DURING MY MEAL I NEEDED TO USE THE REST ROOM, SO I GOT UP AND PROCEEDED TO THE DOOR. WHEN I PUSHED THE DOOR TO THE LADIES ROOM OPEN I COULD CLEARLY SEE A MAN STANDING IN ONE OF THE STALLS (HE HAD NOT EVEN BOTHERED TO CLOSE THE DOOR) WITH HIS BACK TO ME, DOING HIS BUSINESS. I FIGURED THAT EITHER THE MEN'S ROOM WAS FULL OR HE HAD NOT CORRECTLY READ THE SIGN ON THE DOOR. NOT FEELING COMPLETELY COMFORTABLE WITH THE SITUATION, I SIMPLY CLOSED THE DOOR AND WAITED OUTSIDE. IN ABOUT A MINUTE HE CAME OUT, AND I WENT IN. INSIDE I MET ANOTHER LADY WHO HAD OBVIOUSLY ALREADY BEEN IN A STALL WHEN THE GENTLEMAN ENTERED. I SMILED AND SAID: "WELL, YOU NEVER KNOW WHO YOU'RE GOING TO MEET IN HERE DO YOU?" SHE LAUGHED AND SAID: "I GUESS NOT!"

NEITHER OF US SCREAMED, OR RAN RUNNING FROM THE BATHROOM, OR CALLED THE POLICE, OR EMBARRASSED THAT MAN'S POOR WIFE AND RUINED THEIR DINNER BY MAKING A SCENE OVER HIS FAUX-PAS. AND WE CERTAINLY DIDN'T TURN HIM INTO A CRIMINAL FOR SIMPLY ANSWERING A CALL THAT BOTH OF US WERE EQUALLY EAGER TO ANSWER. THAT IS THE WAY THAT MATURE ADULTS REACT TO SUCH A SITUATION, AND I FEEL SURE THAT THE

OVERWHELMINGLY VAST MAJORITY OF MAINERS ARE CAPABLE OF A SIMILAR RESPONSE. THEREFORE THIS PROPOSED BILL IS UNNECESSARY BECAUSE IT SEEKS TO PROVIDE AN ANSWER TO SOMETHING WHICH I, AS A TRANS PERSON, HAVE NOT FOUND TO BE A PROBLEM.

2. THE SECOND POINT IS THAT THIS PROPOSED LAW IS CONTRARY TO WELL-ESTABLISHED MEDICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS.

THE VERY FEW OF US WHO ACTUALLY CHOOSE TO CHANGE OUR GENDER EXPRESSION AND ALTER OUR BODIES WITH HORMONES AND SURGERY DO NOT MAKE THAT DECISION LIGHTLY. THE PROCESS IS LONG AND DIFFICULT, TAKING ON AVERAGE 3 TO 5 YEARS TO FINISH. EVERYONE WHO PURSUES A GENDER CHANGE IS REQUIRED TO FOLLOW ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES, REQUIREMENTS, AND STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN PROMULGATED BY THE MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITIES AND WHICH HAVE BEEN IN PLACE FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS. DURING THAT 3 - 5 YEAR TRANSITION PERIOD, THERE INEVITABLY COMES A POINT WHEN WE APPEAR TO BE OF ONE SEX AND YET STILL HAVE MUCH OF THE ANATOMY OF THE OPPOSITE SEX. ONE OF THE MANDATES OF THOSE GUIDELINES IS THAT WE LIVE, WORK AND INTERACT SOCIALLY AS THE GENDER WE ARE MOVING INTO FOR A MINIMUM OF A YEAR (THAT MEANS 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK) BEFORE WE ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR SURGERY. FAILURE TO MEET THAT REQUIREMENT MAKES US INELIGIBLE FOR SURGERY. ONE OF THE "LIFE" THINGS THAT EVERY HUMAN BEING DOES, BOTH MALE AND FEMALE, IS UTILIZE PUBLIC RESTROOMS AND, LESS-FREQUENTLY, LOCKER ROOMS. WE ARE REQUIRED BY OUR DOCTORS AND THERAPISTS, DURING THAT MINIMUM ONE-YEAR REAL-LIFE-EXPERIENCE, TO ENGAGE IN ALL THE PUBLIC DAILY-LIFE THINGS THAT MEN AND WOMEN DO. TO TELL US THAT WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO DO THAT UNTIL AFTER SURGERY IS THE EQUIVALENT OF TELLING US THAT WE MAY NOT HAVE SURGERY. RECOGNIZING THAT THE SITUATION COULD POTENTIALLY BE PROBLEMATIC, MANY OF US ALREADY CARRY LETTERS FROM OUR DOCTORS EXPLAINING OUR SITUATION; BUT TO MAKE WHAT IS REQUIRED BY ONE WELL-ESTABLISHED SET OF STANDARDS ILLEGAL BY ANOTHER SET WOULD BE AS CONTRADICTIONARY AS TELLING PEOPLE WHOSE KIDNEYS HAVE FAILED THAT THEY ARE ELIGIBLE FOR A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT ONLY IF THEY NEVER APPLY FOR IT.

TO RECAP THEN, I BELIEVE THAT PROPOSED BILL LD 1589 IS UNTENABLE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

1. IT IS UNNECESSARY, AS OTHER MEANS EXIST TO HANDLE THESE SITUATIONS.

2. IT CONTRADICTS ALREADY ESTABLISHED, 40-YEAR-OLD GUIDELINES THAT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BY PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED MENTAL AND MEDICAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS.

BECAUSE OF ALL OF THAT, I OPPOSE THIS BILL AND I ASK THE COMMITTEE TO REPORT IT OUT AS "OUGHT NOT TO PASS".

~~EVERYONE WHO PURSUES A GENDER CHANGE IS REQUIRED TO FOLLOW~~
THANK YOU.