

Pier Franzen
Portland
LD 233

Pier Franzen, LCPC
Portland, ME
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.

My name is Pier Franzen, I'm a licensed mental health therapist, and a resident of Portland.

I am submitting testimony in opposition of each of the bills targeting trans people in sports before the committee today.

Every day in my clinical work, I see the evidence of how exclusion from social belonging causes transgender people real and lasting harm, and how inclusion fosters self-esteem and emotional resilience.

Sports are an important arena where young people build confidence, community, and a positive sense of identity. When transgender girls are told they cannot participate with their peers, they receive a clear and painful message from society: you don't belong here. That message lives deep inside the individual's heart and mind, fostering shame, isolation, and serious mental health risks.

Being excluded from the ability to participate in sports undermines a trans student's core sense of self. It's a known risk factor for depression, anxiety, and suicidality. In fact, peer-reviewed research shows that transgender youth who experience institutional rejection, such as exclusion from sports or bathrooms, are at significantly higher risk for mental health crises and suicide attempts. This bill would increase that risk for youth across Maine.

It's important to name that opposition to trans girls in sports is not grounded in medical consensus or data—it is based in exaggerated fears and misinformation. Every major medical and mental health organization, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association, supports the full inclusion of transgender youth in school life, including athletics. Despite repeated claims of unfair advantage, the facts don't support a blanket exclusion. In the real world, cisgender girls and women routinely compete alongside and outperform their transgender peers.

This legislation is based on fearful misinformation and bigotry, and if enacted, not only harms trans people's participation in athletics, but would have a ripple effect promoting even greater stigma against a marginalized population in our schools, neighborhoods, and healthcare.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on this bill and other related bills aimed to exclude transgender people from athletic participation. Thank you.