

Heather Omand
Freedom
LD 1704

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Freedom, Maine
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Heather Omand, I'm a resident of Freedom. I am writing to you in opposition of the bills before the committee today. These include:

LD 233
LD 868
LD 1002
LD 1134
LD 1704
LD 1337
LD 1432
LD 380

I am a non-binary person born female, I am a mother, and during my time in public school I identified with my gender-assigned at birth. And still I was considered a tom boy and suffered bullying. Many of these bills would have directly impacted me, even though I was not trans. These bills create an unsafe environment for all girls, trans or not.

As a parent of a child enrolled in a Maine public elementary school I know that these bills will harm Maine communities. Schools should create a supportive environment where every student can receive an education and participate in school activities. Participating in sports teaches important values like perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork. We should want more young people to play sports, not put up barriers for girls across Maine that subject them to invasive interrogation or make them risk public ridicule.

As someone born female, I am especially concerned that these bills could leave ALL girls vulnerable to scrutiny and harassment. The idea that any person could call for an invasive or traumatizing "gender check" on any girl who wants to play sports if they think she is "too tall" or "too strong" is terrifying. As someone born female who was consistently characterized as a "tomboy" growing up I am deeply concerned about the unsafe environment we would be creating in schools. I was also consistently bullied in school - bans such as those proposed by these bills would embolden spectators, community members, and fellow competitors to bully and harass girls by accusing them of being trans. If these bills pass, they will become another weapon for bullies to use against girls in Maine. These bans empower schools to engage in policing adherence to gender norms, which unfairly scrutinizes girls' bodies, and have been shown to affect girls of color even more. These bans will cause fear, distrust, and confusion for students, families, and educators. School was hard enough as a girl, these bills have the potential to make school terrifying for ALL girls.

The issues of sports participation are already being handled appropriately by the correct organizations and governing associations to ensure fairness. Changes to Maine law are unnecessary, and help no one. Sports should be as fair and safe as possible for all students. That's why school districts and sports associations already make rules about who can participate in different sports at different levels. Anti-trans activists are seeking broad exclusion of a vulnerable group of students with a one-size-fits-all rule even though individuals are different. Some people are using trans athletes as a weapon to further an agenda to roll back civil rights of LGBTQ people, people of color, women, immigrants, and many others.

Maine must stand up against the national political agenda interfering with our rights

to make our own laws. Bills that discriminate against transgender students violate both state and federal constitutional guarantees of equal protection. LD 233, LD 868, and LD 1134 are discriminatory on the basis of sex and therefore are not constitutional. Any attempt to strip Maine's federal funding for protecting trans people is a federal overreach because it is inaccurate about the law and Maine acted in accord with law at all times. Passing this would reward the federal government's bullying tactics and open the door for further attacks on Mainers' civil rights, but it won't make Maine more safe or fair for anyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you!

Heather Omand