

AdriAnne Cole
Biddeford, Maine
May 8, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is AdriAnne Cole, I am a resident of Biddeford, I am queer, and I have been a high school teacher in southern Maine for 14 years. I also advise my school's GSTA. I am writing in staunch opposition to *LD 868: An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools*. I cannot testify over zoom or in person today to support my trans students because I am busy teaching them, so please accept my written testimony.

Forcing a student to play on the wrong team is cruel. A girl, a *child*, who lives her life at school as a girl from 8am to 3pm does not suddenly become a boy when it's time to play soccer or hockey or basketball. These girls are girls. They just want to play sports with their friends, to stay in shape, to be outside, to be kids. Asking cisgender students to play on a team that does not match their gender identity is something legislators would never do, and targeting trans children in this way is beyond disgraceful. It is discriminatory, and it is discriminatory against *children*.

Many of the trans students I work with, including non-binary students, stress about restrooms. We have several gender-neutral restrooms on my school's campus to alleviate this stress, but the absolute last thing any child should worry about at school is access to restrooms. Requiring students to use restrooms and changing rooms that do not align with their gender identities outs them as transgender and exposes them to bullying and discrimination by their peers. Policing students' gender identity also opens the door to harassment of cisgender students who may not meet their peers' or coaches' expectations for "correct" gender expression. As a queer, gender non-conforming adult who was a queer, gender non-conforming teen, I opted out of activities like school dances, sports, and even prom when I was in high school because I was queer and could not force myself into the requirements and expectations for girls in my small town in the south, either in dress or in behavior. I hate to see us regressing to that as a country, and I thought my adopted home state of Maine was better than this. I demand better for my students, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.

Participation in sports fosters a sense of belonging and benefits children's and teens' mental health. Allowing transgender students to participate in sports as their affirmed gender boosts self-confidence and builds community with their cis peers. Excluding them through state-sponsored discrimination would further alienate them and cause lifelong

harm. I do not wish to teach in a state that intentionally causes harm to already-marginalized children.

I want to see my trans students thrive. I want to see my trans students participate in all aspects of school life and to feel supported by their peers, their teachers, their school, and their state. Though my school community does a great job of this overall, I want all trans children to have the same positive experiences in school, and that is why I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

AdriAnne Cole (she/they)