

May 8, 2025

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Patti Forster, and I am a longtime educator at Camden Hills Regional High School with over three decades of classroom experience. I currently serve as president of the Maine Council for English Language Arts and am the 2021 Knox County Teacher of the Year and the 2020 Maine State English Teacher. I am writing today to testify in opposition to LD 233: An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding Is Provided to the School.

This bill, which seeks to prohibit transgender girls and women—those assigned male at birth but who identify and live as female—from participating in female-designated school sports, is deeply harmful and discriminatory. It targets a vulnerable group of students who already face disproportionately high rates of bullying, exclusion, and mental health challenges. Rather than ensuring fairness, this bill would codify exclusion and promote fear in our schools.

All students deserve the opportunity to learn, grow, and belong—including on the playing field. Participation in school athletics fosters confidence, leadership, teamwork, and belonging. For many transgender students, athletics may be one of the few areas where they can experience connection and affirmation. Denying them this opportunity sends the damaging message that they do not belong.

Existing policies at both the state and federal levels already provide guidelines to ensure fairness in school athletics. These policies consider both inclusion and competitive equity and are informed by medical, psychological, and sports science expertise. LD 233, in contrast, imposes a blanket ban that ignores the complexity of gender identity and development and offers no path for schools to accommodate individual circumstances.

This bill is also at odds with Maine's values of equity and inclusion. Our state has long been a leader in protecting civil rights and promoting the dignity of all people. LD 233 would undermine that legacy by singling out and discriminating against a specific group of students based on gender identity.

Rather than legislating exclusion, we should focus on ensuring that all students have access to safe, welcoming, and affirming educational environments. We can uphold fairness in sports without compromising the rights and humanity of transgender youth.

I urge you to reject LD 233 and affirm your commitment to supporting all Maine students, regardless of gender identity. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patti Forster".

Patti Forster