

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 1134: An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities. This bill would ban transgender girls and women from participating in female-designated athletic programs or using female facilities in schools that receive state funding.

LD 1134 is discriminatory, harmful, and unnecessary. It seeks to legislate exclusion and deny the rights and dignity of transgender youth under the guise of fairness. In reality, this bill would do profound damage to the safety, mental health, and educational success of transgender students, many of whom already face significant barriers to acceptance and inclusion in school communities.

This bill is also in clear violation of the **Maine Human Rights Act**, which protects individuals from discrimination based on gender identity in education, housing, employment, and public accommodations. Transgender girls are girls. Denying them access to school sports and facilities consistent with their gender identity is not only unjust—it is unlawful.

Participation in athletics and access to facilities are vital parts of the school experience. They foster physical and mental well-being, teamwork, self-confidence, and belonging. When we exclude transgender students, we tell them they don't belong in our schools. That message is not only cruel—it puts lives at risk. Transgender youth already experience disproportionately high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide, often driven by rejection and social isolation.

Schools across Maine are already navigating these issues with care and thoughtfulness, developing policies that respect all students' rights while maintaining fairness and safety. LD 1134 would override this nuanced local work with a blanket ban that denies the lived realities and humanity of transgender students.

Let us be clear: there is no evidence that inclusive policies harm cisgender students. On the contrary, inclusion benefits all students by promoting respect, reducing stigma, and teaching empathy.

I urge this committee to reject LD 1134 and stand for the rights of all Maine students to learn, grow, and thrive in environments that affirm their identities and protect their dignity.

Thank you for your time and commitment to justice.

Sincerely,

  
Patti Forster