

Meghan Gardner

Orono, 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 Meghan Gardner, and I live in Orono, Maine. I am a parent, an advocate, and someone who cares deeply about the safety and dignity of women in Maine. I am here to testify in strong opposition to LD 1337.

This bill would create a broad exemption from the Maine Human Rights Act for private shelters providing emergency services to women. It would also redefine how Maine interprets the rights of female athletes by attempting to align our state laws with a limited and politically motivated reading of Title IX.

Let's be clear about what this bill would do. It would allow shelters to deny services to transgender women. It would write discrimination into law. And it would create a chilling precedent that vulnerable women — those experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, or poverty — can be divided into “real” and “not real” women based on outdated ideas about gender.

Trans women in Maine already face disproportionate levels of violence, housing insecurity, and discrimination. They are more likely to be unhoused, more likely to be targeted, and less likely to be able to access safe shelter. Maine shelters have worked for years to navigate the complexities of their work while meeting the needs of all women. They know how to do this safely and compassionately. They do not need this bill, and it will only make their work harder and more dangerous.

I also want to speak directly to the attempt in this bill to reshape how we interpret sex discrimination in athletics. Maine has long recognized that protections for gender identity are a necessary part of ensuring fairness and inclusion. The Maine Human Rights Act has included these protections since 2005. That was not a mistake. It was a reflection of our values as a state. We should not now adopt a narrower, regressive interpretation of Title IX that puts trans athletes at risk and reduces access to participation for all students.

This bill is not about protecting women. It is about dividing women. It is about telling some of us that we are not welcome, not safe, not real. That's not a value I want my daughter growing up with, and it's not a value that Maine should ever write into law.

I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1337. Let's protect all women. Let's uphold the dignity and safety of our communities. And let's keep the Maine Human Rights Act intact.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Meghan Gardner