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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, ~~SEP~~^{SEP} Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. My name is Emily Connelly, I am a resident of Portland, and I am a parent of elementary school-age children in our public school system. I am writing today in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

As a parent, I know that these bills would hurt Maine schools and communities. And as a former athlete on girls sports teams in public school, I can say that participating in school sports helped me form lifelong friendships and learn to work as a team—and they were so much fun! While I wasn't ever the best on any team, I learned so much and felt so proud of what we accomplished together. I hope that my children will have every opportunity to participate in team sports or any school extracurriculars no matter their gender, and I hope for the same for all students. I absolutely do not want any of our children facing invasive investigations into their gender before they can play for a team—or use the bathroom, something we've also already established as a right for transgender students in Maine. These laws won't just impact trans kids, but would open up all of our children to harmful "gender checks" if they're considered too strong or tall or good at sports for their gender. These laws would help no one.

Trans people and trans kids need our support, not these attacks on their rights to exist. Trans friends and loved ones tell me they just want to be able to be themselves and live their lives in peace. Schools and towns that have been supporting trans students should be applauded for helping make their communities stronger. Rather than writing invasive laws targeting trans kids, and threatening to take away money from schools that support them, we should be thinking about better ways to fund our schools, pay our teachers, and make sure all students have what they need.

We need to stand up for all of our students, especially transgender students, at a time when the national government is targeting our state and interfering with our rights to make and protect our own laws. Passing bills that strip funding for schools who support trans kids would reward the federal government's bullying tactics, and it would open the door to further attacks on our civil rights in Maine. It absolutely wouldn't make it more safe for anyone in Maine.

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.