

Todd McKinley
Arundel
LD 1002

To the Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,
My name is Todd McKinley and I am a resident of Maine. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislative acts listed for public hearing on May 8, 2025, specifically LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, and LD 1134. These bills, individually and collectively, represent a grave threat to the rights, safety, and well-being of transgender and gender-diverse individuals in our state, and I urge you to reject them. These proposed acts are rooted in harmful misconceptions and seek to legislate discrimination under the guise of addressing nonexistent problems.

LD 1002, "An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate," is particularly harmful. This bill mandates the deadnaming and misgendering of transgender and nonbinary students. This would inflict significant damage on their mental health, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. It also disregards the reality that some students come from unsupportive or unsafe home environments.

This bill violates the Maine Human Rights Act, which explicitly prohibits discrimination in education based on gender identity. Deadnaming, the act of referring to someone by their former name, is deeply invalidating and harmful. Research shows that being affirmed in their chosen name and pronouns significantly reduces depression (by 71%) and suicide attempts (by 65%) among transgender youth.

Furthermore, this bill disregards the critical importance of identity formation during adolescence, potentially forcing students into "role confusion". Educators already work collaboratively with families while prioritizing student well-being and privacy.

To personalize this, I ask you to consider: have you ever gone by a nickname?

Imagine being forced to use a name that does not reflect who you are.

LD 868, "An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools," discriminates against transgender students across multiple facets of school life. It codifies exclusion within public education and school facilities and encourages lawsuits against schools for supporting transgender students. This bill violates the Maine Human Rights Act, which guarantees access to public accommodations, including school facilities, based on gender identity. Rather than protecting privacy and safety, this bill undermines it by policing students' identities. Transgender students already face increased risks of bullying, depression, and suicide, and this bill will only exacerbate that harm. Schools already have guidelines in place to balance inclusion, privacy, and fairness. Using public funds to enforce discrimination and strip students of their dignity is unacceptable.

LD 233, "An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females¹ When State Funding is Provided to the School," discriminates against transgender girls and women by banning them from participating in girls' sports. This undermines student inclusion, equality, and well-being, and it disregards both science and existing fairness policies in athletics. This violates the Maine Human Rights Act, which protects transgender students from discrimination in education and school programs. Transgender girls are girls, and excluding them from sports is, fundamentally, exclusion from school life. National sports and health organizations support inclusive participation based on gender identity. Participation in athletics builds crucial skills like confidence, resilience, and leadership – rights that every student deserves. Schools already implement inclusive policies that balance fairness and competition. This bill uses public education to marginalize and stigmatize already vulnerable youth.

LD 1134, "An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities," similarly discriminates against transgender girls and women. It denies them access to school sports and facilities that affirm their identities and violates the Maine Human Rights Act's protections based on gender identity. Transgender girls are girls, and exclusion is not fairness; it's discrimination. The

Maine Human Rights Act ensures equal access to public education and facilities. There is no evidence that inclusive policies endanger cisgender students. Schools already manage inclusion and fairness through thoughtful, local policies. Participation in sports and access to school facilities promote well-being, belonging, and confidence.

LD 1704, "An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex," bans transgender students from using restrooms that align with their gender identity. This violates the Maine Human Rights Act and increases mental health risks and stigma for transgender students. The Maine Human Rights Commission affirms that students must be allowed to use facilities aligned with their gender identity. Girls' restrooms have private stalls, so privacy is not compromised. There is no evidence that transgender and nonbinary students create safety risks in school bathrooms. Denying restroom access increases bullying, isolation, and harm. Schools are already handling this issue with care, privacy protections, and community awareness. In conclusion, these proposed acts are discriminatory, harmful, and unnecessary. They are based on fear and misunderstanding rather than facts and compassion. I implore the Judiciary Committee to recognize the profound negative impact these bills would have on transgender and gender-diverse individuals in Maine and to vote against their passage. Let Maine remain a state that values equality, inclusion, and the fundamental rights of all its residents.