

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY AMIE ICHIKAWA

Maine Joint Committee on Judiciary LD 868, An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools

May 8, 2025

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Amie Ichikawa. I am an ambassador for Independent Women and the founder of Woman II Woman, a support group for incarcerated women, and I urge you to support LD 868.

I served nearly five years in the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, one of the largest women's prisons in the country. During that time, I personally experienced how vital it is to have single-sex spaces for the safety, privacy, and rehabilitation of incarcerated women. When California passed Senate Bill 132—the so-called “Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act”—in 2020, it allowed male inmates to transfer into women's prisons, even if they had not undergone any “gender-affirming” treatment. I began receiving desperate calls, letters, and emails from women still in prison, begging for help as men were being placed in their cells and their lives were turned upside down.

Women in prison already live in conditions where privacy is almost nonexistent. Now, they are being forced to share small, overcrowded spaces with men, including those with violent criminal histories and no intention of transitioning. These are not hypothetical concerns. I know of a male inmate who was isolated in a men's prison for assaulting his bunkmates but was transferred directly into a women's general population cell with seven women.

LD 868 is a necessary step to define common sex-based terms such as “female” and “male” in Maine law. Without clear definitions, policies that prioritize ideology over reality will continue to endanger the safety, privacy, and rights of women. This bill also ensures the protection of single-sex spaces, which are critical for the dignity and well-being of women in prisons, shelters, sports, and other settings.

We all want to ensure the rights of all are protected, but when men invade women's spaces, like prisons, women are disproportionately harmed and their

rights are discarded in the name of inclusion. You can be both for equality and single-sex spaces.

This issue is deeply personal for me. I know what it's like to live in a cell where privacy is a luxury and safety is a constant concern. I know the fear of being unable to escape, of not being listened to when you ask for help. But I also know the importance of standing up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

I urge this committee to pass LD 868 to protect women's rights and restore fairness, safety, and dignity to spaces where women are most vulnerable.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amie Ichikawa
Ambassador
Independent Women