

Jessica Eller
Portland
LD 233

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Portland, ME
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share with the Committee. My name is Jessica Eller, I'm a resident of Portland, and I am writing as a mother of teenagers, a Christian and a public health worker. I am writing today in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

We all want our children to be healthy, happy, and to feel Included. Schools are working so hard to help all students feel part of a community. My two teenagers have friends who are trans and they support them like they support all their friends. They just want to be respected as unique individuals and referred to by the name they prefer. These bills are making things harder for them. These bills would hurt Maine schools and communities. They would hurt our kids.

As someone working in public health, we are constantly looking at ways to support healthy lifestyles. Because I was on a swim team in high school, I enjoy swimming laps for exercise as an adult. We should be encouraging kids to participate in sports as they help develop lifelong healthy habits. These bills put up more barriers and make the experience of participating in sports potentially traumatic for students – opening the door to harassment, bullying and abuse especially for any athletes who will now be under additional pressure if they don't meet a supposed physical type. Harm is done by adding extra scrutiny during a time when all bodies are constantly changing and when there is already so much stigma attached to body image.

In addition to better physical health, participating in sports supports mental health by being part of a team and developing self-assurance. Maine reports show us that our trans kids already struggle with mental health issues. The process of coming out as trans in high school as I have observed through my kids' friends is tender and difficult. I am so afraid that if these bills pass we will lose more kids to suicide. These are our Maine kids, and losing them hurts everyone in the community.

My Quaker faith teaches to see that of God in everyone, that we are all Beloved children of God. Othering and judging is NOT consistent with my Christian faith.

These bills are being brought to Maine from a national political agenda that seeks to interfere with our right to make our own laws to support our kids the way we have found best. We cannot afford to make it easier to discriminate against anyone or take away our hard fought civil rights. Lives depend on it.

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!