

## **TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY MADISAN DEBOS**

### **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 Madisan DeBos, and I am a collegiate cross-country and track athlete. I am writing today to urge you to support Maine Legislative Document 868, An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools.

Running is a part of who I am. It's in my family, and it's something I've loved since I was a child, watching my mom, a former All-American athlete, compete in races. From the time I begged to run my first five-mile race as a kindergartner, to the countless hours of training in high school and college, I have given my all to this sport. But during my freshman year at Southern Utah State University, I faced a challenge I never expected.

In 2020, during the indoor track season, I competed in a distance medley relay against an athlete who had previously competed for three years as a male. Now, that athlete was racing in the women's division. Competing against a male created a collective sense of defeat among my teammates and me before the race began.

At the start of the final leg of the relay, the athlete's team was in sixth place. By the end of that one-mile stretch, the athlete had pulled his team up to second place. I will never forget the moment his coach yelled "Slow down!", a phrase I had never heard directed at a competitor in a championship race. Even while holding back, he was dominating female athletes who had trained their entire lives for a fair shot at victory.

My team regularly trained alongside the men's team, so we knew firsthand the physical advantages that male athletes have. We'll do the same workouts, but they'll do significantly more reps than us, and the times they have to do it

are significantly faster. No amount of practice or determination can erase those biological differences.

Women's sports exist because men and women are not the same. We push ourselves to our absolute limits, but when a male enters a female race, we are left competing for second place at best. It's demoralizing, it's unfair, and it undermines the entire purpose of women's athletics.

Though the athlete I competed against is now out of eligibility, the issue remains. More and more males are competing in women's sports, and if we do not act, female athletes will continue to lose the opportunities they have spent their lives working toward.

I refuse to stay silent. My teammates, coaches, friends, and family have supported me in speaking out, and I will continue to advocate for fairness in women's sports. But this issue is bigger than any one athlete or team. If we truly want to protect women's sports and single-sex spaces, we must come together and use our voices to demand change.

I urge this committee to pass Maine LD 868 and stand up for fairness, opportunity, and integrity in women's athletics.

Thank you,

Madisan DeBos  
*Ambassador*  
*Independent Women*