

beth broderick
Maine Youth Action Network
LD 1002

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Beth Broderick, I am a resident of Portland, and I am writing on behalf of the Maine Youth Action Network. I am writing to testify in opposition of all of the bills before the committee today, LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704. I have worked in youth development for more than 20 years and care greatly about young people in Maine. These bills deeply offend the core principles of youth development and lack the moral leadership we strive to model with young people. Young people deserve better.

Schools and communities have an obligation to create supportive environments where all youth can thrive and contribute. As a parent, coach, and in my capacity as the Director of the Maine Youth Action Network, I know that these bills would leave all young people more vulnerable – and especially girls. In Maine, aligned with national data, already we see a drop-off in girls' sports participation by middle school years and a troubling trend in mental health concerns self-reported by girls through the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. Governing bodies for athletics and education in Maine are facing real challenges around bullying and harassment, evidenced in no small part by the ongoing investigations into hazing within various high school sports programs across the state. The committee would be better served supporting these real issues and the school leaders seeking to address them.

Transphobia has no place in Maine's schools. These bills are discriminatory; they serve no constructive purpose. Changes to Maine law are unnecessary and help no one. The Maine Youth Action Network is a statewide community of committed adults and passionate young people who believe in the transformative power of youth leadership. We value young people's thoughts, voices, and solutions for creating more equitable communities and just systems. Young people's passion is the vehicle for building leadership skills, resiliencies, positive relationships, and personal agency. These are the factors that help young people lead healthy and successful lives.

As adults, we have an obligation to lead, right now, in a manner that models the type of contribution we hope to see them make. Respecting state laws, honoring the dignity of each individual, recommitting to schools and communities that create opportunities for all young people to thrive are just a few examples of how we can begin to live up to our obligations. Maine lawmakers should not waste any additional time or taxpayer dollars working in service of someone else's agenda. These bills are bad for students, bad for schools and communities, bad for Maine.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my testimony with the committee. I respectfully urge you to oppose all of the bills before the committee today and any similar efforts in the future.