

**Ellis Ivy**

Brunswick, Maine

May 8, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Ellis Ivy, I'm a resident of Brunswick and a transgender man, and I am writing in strong opposition to the bills before the committee that target the transgender community, including proposals to ban trans girls from participating in school sports, to remove gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act, and to otherwise weaken civil rights protections for trans people.

These bills hit close to home for me. I grew up here in Maine and I'm trans, but I didn't come out until adulthood. I knew who I was from the age of 3, but I buried it for years—afraid of rejection, of violence, of being seen as “other.” I missed out on decades of being able to live as my authentic self and of being able to build real community. When you're not allowed to be yourself, it's hard to form deep, meaningful bonds. In place of that, I turned to sports. That's where I found connection, purpose, and a sense of belonging I couldn't find anywhere else.

On school sports teams, I found what so many trans kids are denied: safety, belonging, and joy. In a world that taught me to distrust and disconnect from my body, sports helped me reclaim it. That access didn't just offer refuge—it shaped me. It gave me the comfort, safety, and confidence to keep moving forward and ultimately shaped who I am today. I never stopped playing sports and today I run an organization dedicated to making athletics accessible to the LGBTQ+ community. I teach martial arts to people who have never felt safe in traditional athletic spaces—many of whom are experiencing the joy of movement and community for the very first time.

And that's what's at stake here—not competitive advantages or imagined threats, but the lives and well-being of real young people. The truth is that there are *fewer than five* openly transgender girls participating in school sports across the entire state of Maine. We are talking about a tiny number of students who just want to play with their friends. Banning them from teams won't protect fairness—it will isolate them, stigmatize them, and put them at greater risk.

This kind of legislation doesn't only harm trans youth. It threatens the integrity of girls' and women's sports as a whole. Bills like these open the door to invasive “gender checks” that subject *all* girls to suspicion and scrutiny. They reinforce outdated stereotypes about what

a girl “should” look like or how she should behave. In trying to target a few trans students, these policies end up policing everyone.

Trans kids are already at elevated risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide. The Trevor Project reports that nearly half of trans and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the past year. But when they are supported—when they are allowed to be themselves—their mental health outcomes improve drastically. Access to sports, for many, is not just recreation. It’s a lifeline.

I also want to address a particularly alarming aspect of the proposed legislation— —the removal of gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act. For nearly 20 years, this Act has protected transgender people from discrimination in housing, employment, education, and public life.

Removing these protections would leave trans people vulnerable to discrimination and send a harmful message that we are unworthy of equal treatment. These protections are essential to our safety and dignity. Without them, trans people could be denied basic rights, and that’s not just a matter of fairness—it’s a matter of survival. I urge you to reject any effort to strip away these basic rights.

I urge you to vote Ought Not to pass on these harmful and unnecessary bills. I urge you to protect trans youth, to uphold civil rights, and to allow kids—*all* kids—the chance to find the joy, healing, and belonging that sports gave me.

Sincerely,

*Ellis Tug*

Brunswick, Maine