

Rikki Hallax  
Freeport  
LD 233

Testimony LD 233:

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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 Rikki Hallax, I am a resident of Freeport, and I am writing in opposition of LD 233: “An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding Is Provided to the School”.

It is my firm belief that schools are not only institutions of education, but also serve as thriving community centers that cultivate a deeply supportive environment for children of all demographics, genders, and ages to explore and expand their interests, form lasting relationships, and build social skills. When I visualize Maine’s schools, I see minimal barriers for children to flourish and realize their potential. I see opportunities for all children, regardless of race, gender, sex, etc., both inside and outside of school, that further foster their development. I see widespread encouragement from educators, challenging children to try new things and engage with extracurriculars. We should be focusing on optimizing the school environment and providing equal opportunity, not building barriers to opportunity.

The “school years” stage of childhood development (ages 6-12) is characterized by increased independence, growing cognitive abilities, and the development of social skills and friendships. At this incredibly important developmental stage, school-age children highly-benefit from participating in extracurricular activities like team sports, which are scientifically proven to develop skills such as cooperation, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and attention span in addition to physical and social growth. These skills are essential for kids to grow and to have healthy interactions with their peers and the adults in their lives.

I personally faced participation barriers in grade school due to my socioeconomic status. Enrolling in team sports was a financial burden for my family, so I wasn’t able to participate until the age of 12. By that point, I had missed vital opportunities for team-building, social bonding, and the like. While my peers went to softball practice and built relationships that could extend outside of the school environment, I was on the sidelines, isolated and afraid that I could never relate to my classmates if I wasn’t doing the same activities. Missing out on those activities had long-term effects on my well-being, both cognitively and emotionally. Banning transgender students from sports would hinder their social, emotional, and cognitive growth, as well as create a deep social divide between cisgender and transgender students, many of whom are currently happily on sports teams together with no ill effects.

LD 233 would be a barrier to the health and well-being of all of Maine’s youth. Athletic success is not determined by sex or gender, it is a combination of both physical and mental factors that greatly vary from individual to individual regardless of assigned sex at birth. Should this bill pass now, it could set a precedent for continued and strengthened gender and sex discrimination, not only in schools but in our workplaces and shared public spaces.

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!