

Debra C Susi
61 Pierce Street
Gardiner, ME 04345
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Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Debra Susi. I am a 38-year educator, the 2022 Somerset County Teacher of the Year and semifinalist for the 2023 Maine State Teacher of the Year. I am writing today to testify in opposition to LD 233: An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participation in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding is Provided to the School.

As a dedicated educator, I write to express my deep concern about the proposed bill's language that states:

"A school administrative unit or an elementary school, secondary school or postsecondary educational institution in the State that receives any state funding may not allow a person whose biological sex assigned at birth is male to participate in an athletic program or activity that is designated for females."

Title IX states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." This law is more than legal text—it is a foundational principle that has shaped how we treat every student for nearly half a century. Every public school in Maine receiving federal funds is bound by this law. I have seen firsthand how respecting students' rights and dignity contributes to their growth and well-being. This bill targets transgender girls by excluding them from sports that align with their gender identity. Participation in athletics promotes confidence, well-being, and a sense of belonging. Denying these opportunities to transgender students causes real harm. It sends the message that they are less worthy or less welcome—something no Maine student should ever feel.

After nearly 40 years of building classroom communities, I know how critical it is for every student to feel safe and valued. At a time when we are working to address student mental health and build inclusive communities, this bill would set us back.

I urge you to reject this bill. It undermines the rights of transgender students, violates federal protections under Title IX, and jeopardizes the trust and well-being of the students we serve. We must continue to build schools where every student is seen, supported, and given the chance to thrive—including on the playing field.

Respectfully Submitted,

