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Cumberland, Maine  
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### **Testimony in Opposition to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, LD 1704**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee.

My name is Allison Harper. I'm a resident of Cumberland, Maine. I am here speaking in my capacity as a middle school lacrosse coach and parent. I coach both for a middle school in Maine where I coach 6th-8th graders as well as my town's recreation program where I've coached 3rd-6th graders for four years.

I am testifying in opposition to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704 which are before the committee on May 8th.

As a coach, parent, and former Division I collegiate athlete, I testify strongly against these bills because these bills would limit transgender kids' opportunity to shine as their fullest selves and they would limit transgender children's access to sports, as well as other children's access to positive sports experiences which I'll describe further below.

While some of these bills stretch more broadly than sports in ways dehumanizing to transgender children, which many testifiers will address, I'm focusing my testimony here on the dangers of these bills' efforts to limit transgender children's access to extracurricular sports activities.

As many of you know, sports are about much more than the given sport. Sports instill some of life's most important lessons that will guide these children when they face some of life's most rewarding and challenging moments in their years to come into adulthood. As grown-ups, many of us find guidance in our current lives from many of the lessons we learned on the field or court and with our teammates as children and youth.

So what are sports really about? When playing sports,

- Kids learn about how to handle both victories/successes/wins and also losses/disappointments with grace.
- Kids learn to take risks and make mistakes.
- Kids learn how to cheer on and play with their teammates, both those more skilled and less skilled.
- They learn about thanking the officials and the other team at the end of a game.
- They learn about the less glamorous parts of sports like ensuring they clean up the bench area, including picking up orange peels:), after a game.

- They learn about supporting their goalie at the end of the game, no matter how many goals were scored.
- They learn about not giving up – that just when they feel exhausted and maybe even hopeless, extra efforts can shift momentum or that they actually do have untapped energy for that one final sprint in the last minute of the game.
- Finally, they have the opportunity to feel the experience of not knowing how to do something, and then practicing and practicing, and then one day the impossible becomes possible – from sheer hard work, effort, and determination. They grow an internal confidence from hard work that they own.

Sports is about much more than the win or loss in a given game, or learning a particular skill.

We should NOT erect barriers to such valuable character-building, confidence-building, and team-building opportunities.

**These anti-trans bills would take this important opportunity for character growth through sports away from Maine’s transgender youth and other children as well, as described below.**

These bills would hurt Maine schools and communities.

- **Schools should create a supportive environment** where every student can receive an education and participate in school activities like sports for the reasons described above.
- **Access to extracurricular activities improves student outcomes.** Kids feel better and do better in school when more children participate in extracurricular activities and have more, not less, ways to shine, grow confidence, and explore their interests.
- We should want **more young people to play sports**, rather than putting up barriers for girls across Maine that subject them to invasive interrogation.

Speaking of invasive interrogation, these bills would leave **ALL girls vulnerable to scrutiny, harassment, invasive interrogation, invasion of privacy, and public ridicule.**

- Right now I can think of the kids I’ve coached who are taller, stronger, more muscular, more talented, score more goals, and so on. **If bills like these are enacted, these girls would face invasive and traumatizing “gender checks.”**
- **These are children** we’re talking about, all of our children being potentially exposed to such gender checks.
- Bans embolden spectators, community members, and fellow competitors to bully and harass girls by accusing them of being transgender. If these bills pass, they will become **another weapon to use widely against any and all girls in Maine.**
- **Any attempt to enforce this ban blatantly violates the privacy** of all Maine women and girls. **When someone is accused of being transgender, what will happen? Children would be subject to invasive personal questions or physical inspections.** Again, this is horrifying to think about for all of us who have children and care about all children in Maine.

- These bans empower schools to engage in **policing adherence to gender norms, which unfairly scrutinizes girls' bodies**, and have been shown to **affect girls of color even more**.
- These bans will cause **fear, distrust, and confusion** for students, families, and educators.

Moreover, the issues of sports participation are already being handled appropriately by the correct organizations and governing associations to ensure fairness. **Changes to Maine law are therefore unnecessary and actually harmful in this area.**

- **School districts and sports associations already make rules** about who can participate in different sports at different levels.
- Athletic success isn't determined solely by gender. **Like other athletes, transgender athletes vary in ability, skill, drive and conditioning. Like all kids, being a trans athlete is no guarantee of great success or failure.**

Anti-trans activists are seeking broad exclusion of a vulnerable group of students with a one-size-fits-all rule even though individuals are different.

- They are using trans athletes as a weapon to further an agenda to roll back civil rights of LGBTQ people, people of color, women, immigrants, and many others.
- Let's not be fooled by the not-believable calls for protecting girls and women from these bills' supporters. The people fighting for these bans are not at all the people fighting for girls and women's equity and rights in sports or more broadly.

Finally and most importantly, trans kids are kids. They are children. And they are children under vicious and cruel attack in our current political and cultural climate. Even before this climate, [they faced increased risk of bullying, suicide, and other life-and-death risk factors](#). Bills like these increase these risks further and carry life and death stakes as they send a message to transgender children, and children more broadly, about who belongs and who doesn't in our communities.

I believe all children, including transgender children, belong in our communities and on our teams.

I ask you to oppose these bills for the reasons mentioned above and to send these children a message that they are safe, they are welcome at school and on sports teams, they are worthy and perfect just as they are, and we are here to protect and celebrate them in the great state of Maine.

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!