

Testimony in opposition to LD 868:

An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools

Rev. Dr. Allen Ewing-Merrill

Portland, Maine

May 8, 2025

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

I am writing as a Mainer from a long line of Mainers, as a member of the clergy, and as a nonprofit leader in Portland, Maine. As a Christian, as a former high school teacher in Maine, and as a parent of teenagers and young adults, I strongly oppose this bill and all of the anti-trans legislation that you are hearing during this session.

I am blessed to know and care about a number of people from the transgender community. Without exception, they are good and upright people who contribute in significant ways to our communities, who love their families, who work every day to make the world a better place. This bill and the others like it are discriminatory and oppressive. They are built around misrepresentations of people I care about — people created in the image of God and beloved by God — people of sacred worth. In short, they will cause harm to people whom God loves.

Our schools ought to be safe, supportive, and inclusive spaces where every student's humanity and dignity are affirmed, where their rights are protected, and where they can receive the best possible education while participating fully and equally in school activities. This bill and the others like it would create hostile and threatening environments — not only for transgender students, but for all students. No one benefits from a school culture that promotes suspicious and invasive interrogation, that makes judgmental assumptions about people's identities, or that aims to exclude, shame, and exercise control through punitive means.

The effect of a bill like this one, if enacted as law, would be to embolden classmates, sports spectators, community members, teammates, and competitors to bully and harass girls. Bans like the ones proposed by this bill would empower schools to engage in policing students, pressuring them to adhere to gender norms, scrutinizing girls' bodies, creating environments of fear, distrust, and division. The impact of a law like this would be a blatant violation of privacy for all Maine women and girls. Because of this bill and others, my trans friends are living in fear!

Ultimately, this bill perpetuates dehumanizing stereotypes. Athletic success isn't determined solely by gender or gender identity. The truth is, trans athletes vary in ability, drive, and conditioning — just like all athletes. Despite what you may hear in the simplistic arguments being made by those who support this bill, being a trans athlete is no guarantee of great success on the court or field, and it's also no antidote to failure. Trans students and trans athletes are just like everyone else: some are gifted athletes and others are not. Changes to Maine law are unnecessary, because school districts already develop and enforce guidelines about who can participate. And let's be clear: When someone needs to use the restroom, they should do so where they feel comfortable and safe.

I am deeply concerned about the ways in which transgender students have been targeted, hatefully, by those who are desperately seeking to advance a broad regressive agenda that would roll back the civil rights of our LGBTQ neighbors, people of color, women, immigrants, and others. My Christian faith tells me that this is morally and ethically wrong — a direct violation of God's call to love our neighbors as ourselves. My faith tells me that upholding the dignity of transgender students, honoring their sacred worth, and celebrating their unique gifts, abilities, perspectives, and contributions is the morally and ethically right thing to do.

Please do the right thing: pledge your opposition to LD 233. I am praying for you as you deliberate.

Allen Ewing-Merrill
Portland
LD 868

My written testimony is attached as a PDF document. Thank you for receiving it.