

Caitlin O'Connell
Portland
LD 1337

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

I am writing in strong opposition to the following proposed bills: LD 233, LD 868, LD 1134, and LD 1337.

Athletics have been a meaningful part of my life for as long as I can remember. I'm a cisgender woman athlete, and I've competed in the women's division across many levels - from casual and intramural to collegiate and professional play. In those spaces, I've played with and against transgender athletes as teammates and opponents alike. And my experience has been...unremarkable. At least unremarkable in the ways these bills and other misguided narratives seek to portray trans girls and women as "the problem," - as threats to the integrity or safety of women's sports. That's simply not true. On the contrary, some of my favorite and most meaningful athletic experiences have been in spaces that were intentionally inclusive of trans athletes and welcoming to people of all gender identities - environments that expanded, rather than limited opportunities to play.

The real risk comes from harmful and exclusionary policies, like these proposed bills - which are put forth under the guise of "safety" and "fairness" for girls and women. These kinds of blanket ban policies harmfully impact trans youth most directly and also have real consequences for cisgender girls and women - opening doors to scrutiny and harassment via invasive "gender checks" for athletes competing in women's divisions and may be seen as "too tall" or "too strong," etc. Any attempt to enforce this ban blatantly violates the privacy of all Maine women and girls. These proposed bills are unconstitutional, violating both state and federal constitutional guarantees of equal protection.

I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills and to affirm that all Maine youth, including transgender youth, deserve safety, inclusion, and the chance to thrive.

Thank you,
Caitlin O'Connell
Portland, ME