

Torry Verrill
Warren
LD 1337

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee:
My name is Torry Verrill and I am a resident of Warren. I am testifying in opposition to LDs 233, 868, 1002, 1134 and 1704 as well as LD 1337, 1432, and 380. I am devastated these bills are targeting transgender students in sports, the ability to use facilities, the right to access medical treatments, and most horrifying, the removal of gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act. Human rights should never be up for debate.

I have seen multiple reports that there are only two transgender athletes in the state of Maine. While I appreciate the point that this is a big todo about nothing, there are more than two transgender athletes in Maine. I know, because I have taught elementary school students who are transgender athletes throughout my career. One such student started using she/her pronouns when she was eight. She explored her gender, all on her own, for years before that. She played a variety of sports, but she loved soccer. Despite what people would have you believe, she was not a soccer star just because she had XY chromosomes. In fact, despite playing for years, she was barely average. Transgender athletes, just like all athletes, come in all shapes and sizes and do not automatically have an advantage.

When this student started using she/her pronouns, the school she attended (and I worked at) did the bare minimum to support her. What little support she did receive was only in response to their obligation to the law under the Maine Human Rights Act. All students should receive an education in a safe and supportive environment, and all students should have access to sports and other extracurricular activities. Throwing up barriers just because a person is transgender is not only discriminatory, it is cruel. All children deserve access to all the opportunities available to them and their peers. Someday this student may be a high school transgender athlete, or she may be a drama girl who simply needs access to a bathroom. Maybe she'll be valedictorian or class president or the best debate club member the school has ever seen. No matter what she does, she deserves to be safe. She deserves protection under the law. And most importantly, she deserves to be herself.

Thank you for all your work, time, and commitment to Maine. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in front of you today. I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on these LDs. Please keep my transgender students in your mind as you move forward in this work.