

Testimony Opposing LD 1134

Honorable members of the committee,

My name Katie Brydon. I am a parent and a teacher. I am testifying today as a private citizen, but I also serve on the School Board for the Bangor School Department and am Chair of the City of Bangor's Advisory Committee for Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights. I live at 51 Poplar Street in Bangor, Maine. I spend every day of my life working to help others. I wake up with the goal of uplifting our most vulnerable populations, and I work hard to make Maine a state I'm proud to raise my children – one of kindness, hope, and belonging. I do this because it's the right thing to do. I was taught, as a Mainer, that we live and let live. We help when asked, and we mind our own business. How is the most critical body of people – our elected officials – spending valuable time and resources on taking away freedom, liberties, and peace from our most vulnerable populations. I do not understand how we got here, but I'm here today to ask you to stop. Specifically, stop LD 1134. While I understand the legislative process involves considering various perspectives, I believe these bills would be detrimental to the well-being and inclusivity of our schools and would divert crucial attention from more pressing issues facing Maine.

As an experienced public servant and teacher, I know firsthand that these bills would harm Maine schools and communities in the following ways:

- **Creating a Supportive School Environment:** Schools should be dedicated to fostering a supportive environment where every student, regardless of their identity, can access education and fully participate in school activities. These bills would undermine this fundamental principle for a vulnerable group of students.
- **Enhancing School Climate through Extracurricular Participation:** A positive school climate is strengthened when more students feel welcome and are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. These bills would create unnecessary barriers, potentially reducing participation and negatively impacting the overall school environment.
- **The Value of Sports Participation:** Involvement in sports imparts crucial life lessons such as perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork. We should be striving to increase opportunities for young people to engage in sports, not erect discriminatory barriers that could subject girls across Maine to intrusive scrutiny and the risk of public ridicule.

Furthermore, as a mom of two girls, I am deeply concerned that these bills would leave *all* girls vulnerable to scrutiny and harassment:

- **Risk of Invasive "Gender Checks":** These bans could invite unwarranted and traumatizing "gender checks" on any girl participating in sports based on subjective perceptions of her physical attributes.
- **Fueling Bullying and Harassment:** Passing these bills would embolden individuals, including spectators and fellow competitors, to bully and harass girls by falsely accusing them of being transgender. This legislation would inadvertently provide another tool for discriminatory behavior.
- **Violation of Privacy:** Any attempt to enforce these bans would necessitate a blatant violation of the privacy of all Maine women and girls.
- **Disproportionate Impact and Policing of Gender Norms:** These bans empower schools to police adherence to gender norms, leading to unfair scrutiny of girls' bodies, a phenomenon that has been shown to disproportionately affect girls of color. This will undoubtedly generate fear, distrust, and confusion among students, families, and educators.

It is also crucial to recognize that:

- **Existing Mechanisms for Fair Play:** The issues surrounding sports participation are already being appropriately addressed by relevant organizations and governing associations to ensure fairness at all levels. Legislative intervention at this level is unnecessary and counterproductive.
- **Multifaceted Nature of Athletic Success:** Athletic success is not solely determined by gender. Transgender athletes, like all athletes, exhibit a wide range of abilities, dedication, and conditioning. Being transgender is not a guarantee of either success or failure in sports.
- **Underlying Political Agenda:** It is evident that anti-transgender activists are using the issue of transgender athletes to advance a broader agenda aimed at eroding the civil rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, women, immigrants, and other marginalized groups.

Finally, I urge you to consider the broader implications for our state:

- **Standing Against National Political Interference:** Maine must resist the encroachment of national political agendas that seek to undermine our right to self-governance and the creation of our own laws.
- **Constitutional Violations:** Bills that discriminate against transgender students violate fundamental state and federal constitutional guarantees of equal protection.

Specifically, LD 1134 is discriminatory based on sex and are therefore unconstitutional.

- **Adherence to Title IX and the Maine Human Rights Act:** Title IX prohibits sex discrimination and does not mandate the exclusion of transgender or intersex athletes. Furthermore, the Maine Human Rights Act has included protections for gender identity since 2005.
- **Preventing Federal Overreach and Protecting Maine's Civil Rights:** Any attempt by the federal government to strip Maine's funding for protecting transgender individuals is an overreach based on a misinterpretation of the law. Passing these discriminatory bills would reward such bullying tactics and create a dangerous precedent for further attacks on the civil rights of all Mainers. It will not enhance the safety or fairness of our state for anyone.

Instead of focusing on legislation that marginalizes and harms vulnerable children, I implore you to prioritize the critical issues facing our state, such as the housing crisis, the opioid epidemic, rising costs of living, and supporting our tourism industry. These are the issues that demand our time, resources, and attention.

I urge you to reject LD 1134 and instead focus on building a more inclusive, supportive, and prosperous Maine for all its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Brydon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Katie Brydon
51 Poplar Street, Bangor
katiebrydon@gmail.com

Katie Brydon
Bangor
LD 1134

Testimony Opposing LD 1134

Honorable members of the committee,

My name Katie Brydon. I am a parent and a teacher. I am testifying today as a private citizen, but I also serve on the School Board for the Bangor School Department and am Chair of the City of Bangor's Advisory Committee for Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights. I live at 51 Poplar Street in Bangor, Maine. I spend every day of my life working to help others. I wake up with the goal of uplifting our most vulnerable populations, and I work hard to make Maine a state I'm proud to raise my children – one of kindness, hope, and belonging. I do this because it's the right thing to do. I was taught, as a Mainer, that we live and let live. We help when asked, and we mind our own business. How is the most critical body of people – our elected officials – spending valuable time and resources on taking away freedom, liberties, and peace from our most vulnerable populations. I do not understand how we got here, but I'm here today to ask you to stop. Specifically, stop LD 1134. While I understand the legislative process involves considering various perspectives, I believe these bills would be detrimental to the well-being and inclusivity of our schools and would divert crucial attention from more pressing issues facing Maine.

As an experienced public servant and teacher, I know firsthand that these bills would harm Maine schools and communities in the following ways:

- Creating a Supportive School Environment: Schools should be dedicated to fostering a supportive environment where every student, regardless of their identity, can access education and fully participate in school activities. These bills would undermine this fundamental principle for a vulnerable group of students.
- Enhancing School Climate through Extracurricular Participation: A positive school climate is strengthened when more students feel welcome and are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. These bills would create unnecessary barriers, potentially reducing participation and negatively impacting the overall school environment.
- The Value of Sports Participation: Involvement in sports imparts crucial life lessons such as perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork. We should be striving to increase opportunities for young people to engage in sports, not erect discriminatory barriers that could subject girls across Maine to intrusive scrutiny and the risk of public ridicule.

Furthermore, as a mom of two girls, I am deeply concerned that these bills would leave all girls vulnerable to scrutiny and harassment:

- Risk of Invasive "Gender Checks": These bans could invite unwarranted and traumatizing "gender checks" on any girl participating in sports based on subjective perceptions of her physical attributes.
- Fueling Bullying and Harassment: Passing these bills would embolden individuals, including spectators and fellow competitors, to bully and harass girls by falsely accusing them of being transgender. This legislation would inadvertently provide another tool for discriminatory behavior.
- Violation of Privacy: Any attempt to enforce these bans would necessitate a blatant violation of the privacy of all Maine women and girls.
- Disproportionate Impact and Policing of Gender Norms: These bans empower schools to police adherence to gender norms, leading to unfair scrutiny of girls' bodies, a phenomenon that has been shown to disproportionately affect girls of color. This will undoubtedly generate fear, distrust, and confusion among students, families, and educators.

Regarding LD 1337 specifically:

- Increased Vulnerability for Transgender Women Experiencing Homelessness: Transgender women in Maine already face significant obstacles in accessing safe shelter and are at a disproportionately high risk of violence when unhoused. Shelters have the expertise to ensure the safety of all individuals in their care.

It is also crucial to recognize that:

- Existing Mechanisms for Fair Play: The issues surrounding sports participation are already being appropriately addressed by relevant organizations and governing associations to ensure fairness at all levels. Legislative intervention at this level is unnecessary and counterproductive.
- Multifaceted Nature of Athletic Success: Athletic success is not solely determined by gender. Transgender athletes, like all athletes, exhibit a wide range of abilities, dedication, and conditioning. Being transgender is not a guarantee of either success or failure in sports.
- Underlying Political Agenda: It is evident that anti-transgender activists are using the issue of transgender athletes to advance a broader agenda aimed at eroding the civil rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, women, immigrants, and other marginalized groups.

Finally, I urge you to consider the broader implications for our state:

- Standing Against National Political Interference: Maine must resist the encroachment of national political agendas that seek to undermine our right to self-governance and the creation of our own laws.
- Constitutional Violations: Bills that discriminate against transgender students violate fundamental state and federal constitutional guarantees of equal protection. Specifically, LD 1134 is discriminatory based on sex and are therefore unconstitutional.
- Adherence to Title IX and the Maine Human Rights Act: Title IX prohibits sex discrimination and does not mandate the exclusion of transgender or intersex athletes. Furthermore, the Maine Human Rights Act has included protections for gender identity since 2005.
- Preventing Federal Overreach and Protecting Maine's Civil Rights: Any attempt by the federal government to strip Maine's funding for protecting transgender individuals is an overreach based on a misinterpretation of the law. Passing these discriminatory bills would reward such bullying tactics and create a dangerous precedent for further attacks on the civil rights of all Mainers. It will not enhance the safety or fairness of our state for anyone.

Instead of focusing on legislation that marginalizes and harms vulnerable children, I implore you to prioritize the critical issues facing our state, such as the housing crisis, the opioid epidemic, rising costs of living, and supporting our tourism industry. These are the issues that demand our time, resources, and attention.

I urge you to reject LD 1134 and instead focus on building a more inclusive, supportive, and prosperous Maine for all its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Katie Brydon
51 Poplar Street, Bangor
katiebrydon@gmail.com