

Mary O'Connell
South Portland, Maine
May 8, 2025

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

I am writing in opposition of the bills before the committee on Thursday, May 8, 2025. As a parent, I know that these bills would hurt Maine schools and communities.

School should be an environment where all students can learn and grow. Extracurricular activities, such as sports, are an important part of a vibrant school culture, and give kids the opportunity to build friendships, try new skills, develop responsibility, and feel a sense of belonging.

I'm very concerned these bills would *discourage* students, especially girls, from participating in sports, and create a culture of fear and harassment. **Bans like the proposed would invite peers and spectators to make invasive comments about young girls' bodies**, and embolden outdated and harmful assumptions and judgments about how girls "should" look, act, and play. If these bills pass, they will become another weapon for bullies to use against girls in Maine.

I love to watch my (cisgender) middle school daughter bring her competitive spirit, strength, and dedication to the soccer and lacrosse fields. **Bans like these would undermine the physical and social confidence youth sports are meant to foster, and instead subject kids like my daughter and her teammates to unfair scrutiny that violates their privacy**, compounding the immense cultural pressures around body image and conformity girls already face.

In January, departing Surgeon General Murthy, one of our country's foremost leaders on issues of public health, called on Americans to come together and commit to each other, to choose community and be community builders. **So why, at a time when Maine young people are experiencing mental health issues at crisis proportions, would we enact unnecessary rules that will push some of our most vulnerable children away?**

The issues of sports participation are already being handled appropriately by the correct organizations and governing associations to ensure fairness. Like other athletes, trans athletes vary in ability, drive, and conditioning. Being a trans athlete is no guarantee of great success or failure. Changes to Maine law are unnecessary, and help no one. **These unnecessary bans only alienate and isolate children who are already at greater risk for mental health emergencies and suicide.** I want to live in a state where our top priority is ensuring all children thrive and feel loved.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. **I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills.**