

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Olivia Pennington, and I live in Portland. I am here today to urge you to oppose [LD 233: An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding Is Provided to the School](#), [LD 868: An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools](#), [LD 1002: An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate](#), [LD 1134: An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities](#), and [LD 1704: An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex](#).

These bills have nothing to do with protecting women, or children. These bills are blatant discrimination against trans people. I have lived in Maine all my life. Never once has a trans person made me feel unsafe. I grew up in the rural midcoast, where I was a competitive swimmer my whole life. My sports team was a source of comfort, community, and belonging. Every child deserves the opportunity to experience that.

In 2007, I was in the fifth grade at Nobleboro Central School when I came out as a lesbian. I was a child, but I knew exactly who I was. I wanted coming out to be an experience that set me free. Instead, I was immediately met with death threats, physical violence, harassment, and ruthless bullying. It almost cost me my life. What I can tell you is that my after-school sports team was the only place where I felt safe.

I was a child who needed protection, but instead, I was painted as a threat to my peers. Almost twenty years later, and conditions have only worsened for queer youth in Maine. Trans youth are being vilified, demonized, and painted as threats to their peers by grown adults. Lawmakers, whose job it is to protect these young people, are proposing laws that would place them in grave danger. Lawmakers, grown adults who hold the power to affect the laws of our state, are choosing to spend their time bullying, doxxing, and threatening the safety of young, vulnerable, trans people.

Let's be clear: these laws are in no way meant to protect young people. They are meant to ostracize and discriminate against young trans people and to cut off their ability to participate in the joyous parts of youth. Queer & trans youth have always and will always exist, in urban and rural areas. Our job as adults is to create a world where all children are safe, cherished, and nurtured. I urge you to protect children, and vote "ought not to pass" on all of these bills.