

May 7, 2025

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

My name is Tara Jenkins and my pronouns are she/her. I am a registered voter who lives in Scarborough, ME. I am the mother of two teenagers who attend Scarborough High School and have a vested interest in my children's environment each day while they go to school. It's hard enough to send your kids to school each day, with the risk of mass shootings present each time I say goodbye to them in the morning. And now we are dealing with systemic discrimination introduced into the schools that would harm every student in some way.

I am writing to voice **my deep and total opposition** to all of the bills being considered in the Maine Legislature that would roll back civil rights, ban transgender girls from participating on school sports teams, and open the door to harassment, bullying and abuse of ALL girls. Sanctioned permission to discriminate against anyone is permission to discriminate against everyone, and we must protect everyone's human rights to be fully who they are, no matter where they are, and in particular in our schools. These bills will harm students irreparably, foster hatred in our communities, and are absolutely misaligned with who we are as a state. We are a state where every student should have the freedom to be themselves, to be safe, and to feel respected at school. We are a state where trans people must have the same dignity and respect as all people.

I am strongly voicing my opposition for:

- 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
- 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
- LD 1337: An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters
- LD 1432: An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act
- LD 380: An Act to Amend Certain Laws Regarding Gender-affirming Health Care Services

These bills do nothing to address the real concerns women and girls face in sports, instead targeting a small group of transgender youth for unfair treatment, excluding them from vital aspects of education, and exposing them to increased harassment. Young people of all backgrounds deserve access to sports' proven social, mental, and physical benefits. Academic research affirms that transgender women do not have any inherent advantage in sport, and we believe that all trans people deserve to play sports and do what they love. These bills would not only exclude kids from a vital aspect of many youths' education but make them targets of hate and harassment by peers, educators, and parents. To truly support girls and women in sports, lawmakers must address continued inequality in funding and facilities compared to men's sports and the rampant sexual abuse targeting athletes of all genders.

These laws are not what the people of Maine need or want. Anti-trans lawmakers are causing an intentional distraction from the real issues facing Mainers that lawmakers should be addressing, including food instability, lack of affordable housing, health care access, and caring for our elders. The problems of sports participation are already being handled appropriately by the correct organizations and governing associations to ensure fairness. **Changes to Maine law are unnecessary, and help no one.**

The common ground we can all find together is that the majority of parents want their children to have access to as many opportunities as possible, and I believe that sports teach young people meaningful life lessons. This includes trans youth, who deserve our support to live their best lives. **Schools must create a supportive environment** where every student can receive an education and participate in school activities. We know that school environments/spirit improve when more children participate in extracurricular activities. As I've seen with my children, sports teach important values like perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork.

Particularly in these times, we want more young people to play sports, not put up barriers for girls across Maine that subject them to invasive interrogation or make them risk public ridicule.

As a parent, I know that these bills would leave ALL children vulnerable to scrutiny and harassment, in particular all girls, and open the door further for additional harassment for anyone deemed "different". These bans would invite any person to call for an invasive or traumatizing "gender check" on any girl who wants to play sports if they think she is "too tall" or "too strong." I'm fearful that these bans, even just in their introduction to the legislator, embolden spectators, community members, and fellow competitors to bully and harass girls by accusing them of being trans. If these bills pass, they will become another weapon for bullies to use against girls in Maine. These bans empower schools to engage in policing adherence to gender norms, which unfairly scrutinize girls' bodies, and have been shown to affect girls of color even more. These bans will cause fear, distrust, and confusion for students, families, and educators. This is absolutely unacceptable.

Sports should be as fair and safe as possible for all students. That's why school districts and sports associations already make rules about who can participate in different sports at different levels. We all know that athletic success isn't determined solely by gender. Like other athletes, trans athletes vary in ability, drive and conditioning. Being a trans athlete is no guarantee of great success or failure. Anti-trans activists are seeking broad exclusion of a vulnerable group of students with a one-size-fits-all rule, even though individuals are different. Some people are using trans athletes as a weapon to further an agenda to roll back civil rights of LGBTQ people, people of color, women, immigrants, and many others. As a woman and a mother with a gay son, I am deeply concerned about the harm to transgender people and the precedent these bills set for continued attacks on women's and LGBTQ rights.

Any attempt to enforce these bills **blatantly violates the privacy of all Maine women and girls.**

Specific to LD 1337, trans women in Maine *already* face serious barriers to accessing appropriate shelter, not to mention disproportionate risks of violence, when they are unhoused. Shelters know how to keep all women safe and have been doing it for years.

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

With respect and appreciation,

Tara Jenkins
Scarborough, ME