

Personal Testimony in Opposition to Trans Sports Bans

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Andrew Bourassa. I live and vote in Biddeford, I'm a parent of a trans child, an Early Educator, and a PFLAG Portland Maine Board Member. I come before you today to not only represent myself but also as a placeholder for the many Families of Individuals in the Trans community who do not feel safe being here.

As an Early Educator, I can say with certainty that from their very first day of school, we teach our youngest Mainers the values of inclusion and acceptance. That's because In Maine, we don't exclude children for being different—we celebrate them. However, that is exactly what these bills are about - exclusion. And for those adults who may not know what my PreK students know, Adding the word "trans" doesn't make exclusion any more acceptable.

These anti trans bills threatens to undermine ALL of this foundational work by sending the opposite message. They target children at the most vulnerable times developmentally—when they are literally finding their place in the world. And maybe just as important to the state, whether Maine is a place where they can thrive and belong. I think about the many children—much like my own, top students with talents and skills our state desperately needs—who are watching closely as we debate who deserves to participate fully. The message we send today will directly influence whether they choose to build their futures here in Maine. These young people and their allies are not residents Maine can afford to lose.

I was a decent athlete in school and have coached various youth sports, and I can tell you firsthand that the fears driving these bills simply don't match reality. I cannot count the number of times I've witnessed co-ed sports done successfully and safely. Female teams regularly scrimmage male teams without great risk of physical danger. Males play on female field hockey teams in small towns. My wife and I coached a nearly all-girls soccer team that dominated their co-ed peers. This idea that transgender participation threatens the integrity or safety of our sports programs contradicts my two decades of direct experience and every available fact.

Furthermore, based on testimony shared by the bills sponsor, who'd aimed that sports like cheerleading and men's hockey re co-ed because they allow the opposite gender, there is an obvious solution here. Make all Maine sports Co-ed, allowing any gender to play on the team they so choose. That is true inclusion and eliminates the fear of elevated injury risk because it would shift the liability and risk assessment to the individual, not the school or team.

For over 20 years, Maine has successfully included transgender youth in athletics without a single documented case of competitive imbalance or increased injuries. We already have

effective protocols through the Maine Principals' Association to address any concerns that arise. These bills are not solutions to real problems—they're responses to fears that Maine's experience has proven unfounded.

Worse yet, as a Mainer and someone in the school systems currently, I can attest that this is not a problem from and here in Maine. This agenda, is, as we say in Maine, "from away."

What is very real, however, is the harm these bans would cause. Fears are dangerous things. **In old New England, fears led them to burn women, not "witches." Today in Maine, these bills don't target "trans kids"—they target children. Real, breathing, hoping, Maine children.**

Our state motto is "Dirigo"—I lead. Maine has led with inclusive policies that protect the dignity and rights of all our people. Will we now abandon that leadership to join states racing backward? Will we tell some of our children they don't deserve the same opportunities as their peers?

I urge you, as representatives of all Maine people, to reject these harmful bills and instead focus on making sports more accessible, supportive, and fair for every Maine child. Our children are watching to see if we truly believe in the values we've taught them.

Thank you for your consideration.