

Hi, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sass Borodkin, I live in Skowhegan, and I'm writing in opposition of LD 2239 An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex.

I'm writing from three vantage points – as a nonbinary person who is part of the transgender community, as a family member of multiple young trans people, and as a person who created and ran a safe space drop-in for LGBTQ+ youth that drew 10-20 young people weekly for roughly three years before the pandemic.

When I started the drop-in space, I thought it would be a sweet little gathering once a week for queer and trans young people to get together to play games and just have some fun. Shortly after starting it, I found that I needed to go get my certification in Mental Health First Aid from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) to hold the space responsibly due to the high occurrences of mental health crises I kept needing to manage week after week. Time and again the reason these young people were in crisis, many of whom were professing a desire to die, boiled down to not being accepted for who they were by people they loved and by society at large.

There are a lot of statistics and points that can be made about sports and civil rights and even the process of state law, but I'm wanting you to think about another statistic and point, and it's the one that suggests that the Trevor Project estimates that more than 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people (ages 13-24) seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S. — **and at least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds**<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2024 US National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People<sup>2</sup>, **roughly half of all trans and nonbinary youth attempt suicide annually**. Also cited in the same survey is that: **“LGBTQ+ young people who reported living in very accepting communities attempted suicide at less than half the rate of those who reported living in very unaccepting communities.”**

LD 2239 will undoubtedly increase the epidemic of successful and attempted suicides in Maine for transgender and nonbinary young people who will feel rightfully discriminated against regardless of their engagement with sports. It will also open the flood gates for even more ways to discriminate against this vulnerable and already heavily targeted group of people in general. Please don't disregard these inevitable and damning truths. And please don't disregard the fact that connection and acceptance are unequivocally some of the most successful antidotes to the isolation that breeds suicidal ideation – both of which this measure will sharply curtail for those who will be impacted. Not just in the logistical implementation of its intent, but also by the impact of the social normalizing of exclusion based on identity. Exclusion of children. Please help young people in the state to feel safer by not helping to create exclusionary, emotionally violent practices within the systems that are meant to educate and nurture growth.

I know this is a ballot measure and not a bill, and so I'm not asking you to kill it or vote it down, as I know those aren't options here, but I am writing to ask that you don't do anything to help it move through. This measure is dangerous. Plain and simple.

Thanks for listening.

Sass Borodkin  
Skowhegan, ME

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/estimate-of-how-often-lgbtq-youth-attempt-suicide-in-the-u-s/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/>