



# Maine Conservation Voters

*Inform. Vote. Protect.*

## Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Legislative Director, Maine Conservation Voters, in Opposition to LD 2239 “An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex”

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sarah Woodbury, and I am the Legislative Director with Maine Conservation Voters (MCV). MCV represents over 14,000 members and supporters who are building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. Please accept MCV’s testimony in opposition to LD 2239.

You may be wondering, why would MCV care about these bills? It’s not often that we testify in front of the Judiciary Committee. The answer is that we know that in order to protect our environment, we must protect our democracy. And we know that to protect our democracy, we must not allow our state to be bullied into submission — that is not how democracies work. The federal administration is already targeting states for a number of other issues, including climate policy.<sup>1</sup> In this moment, to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, the votes we cast, and all of the people who depend on these systems, we need unprecedented solidarity. It will not be easy, but I am asking this committee to hold the line; don’t give in. Do not let the federal government and out-of-state billionaires bully our kids. In many ways, for our environment and our democracy, that is more important than the policies themselves.

We should get to the policies too, though. It is easy to forget that Title IX is quite new.<sup>2</sup> I am a cisgender woman, or supposedly, the kind of person these bills are supposed to protect. I can tell you, without a doubt, that they do not do that. This bill does nothing but single out an already vulnerable group and make it clear to them that they don’t matter, they don’t belong, and their communities do not care about them.

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<sup>1</sup> The White House. (Apr 8, 2025). Protecting American Energy from State Overreach. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/protecting-american-energy-from-state-overreach/>

<sup>2</sup> Women’s Sports Foundation (Accessed May 2025). History of Title IX. <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/advocacy/history-of-title-ix/>

First, participation in sports is far more important than winning, particularly in school. The American Medical Association calls violence against transgender people an “[epidemic](#),” and [rates of suicide](#) are far higher for transgender and non-binary youth than cisgender youth. At the same time, we know that sport changes lives. [Participation in sports](#) has physical benefits like a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, academic benefits like higher high school graduation rates and college attendance, and psychological benefits like improved self-esteem and sense of well-being. Everyone deserves that opportunity.

Second, questions of advantage are not nearly as clear as fearmongers would like you to believe. All sports have some genetic factor that improves performance — are we going to ban tall basketball players next? Twenty-three-time Olympic gold medal winner Michael Phelps was not only a strong swimmer, he had many genetic advantages including higher lung capacity and a longer wingspan. Should he have been prohibited from competing? Of course not. Additionally, it is *easy* to see that trans athletes are not causing problems, as we already have amazing transgender women and girls competing everywhere from high school, to college, to Olympic Trials, and cisgender women still have opportunities to thrive.

Above all, though, it is worth remembering what actual problems facing women and girls in school and sports. They are facing scrutiny and exploitation of their bodies, disordered eating, lack of funding and sponsorships, and health disparities when it comes to issues such as injury prevention and nutrition. On top of all those issues is the very real threat of sexual assault and violence that women and girls face in sports, many times from the cis coaches, trainers, and administrators that are meant to protect them. One only has to look at what happened to the US Women’s Gymnastics team at the hands of Larry Nassar to see the very real impacts of these types of issues on women and girls in sports. Legislation like this and the debate around it doesn’t fix these very real problems. It does nothing to actually protect women and girls in sports. In fact, it makes them worse. Girls are facing serious long-term medical and physical harm, because they are valued for their bodies, for their results. The bill before you is dehumanizing, plain and simple. Of course, it will harm trans people. But I promise you, it will harm us all. I urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 2239 to protect ALL women and girls.