

Jess Cooper

South Paris, Maine

May 8, 2025

RE: LD 233 LD 868 LD 1002 LD 1134 LD 1704

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Jess Cooper, I'm a resident of South Paris, and I am a trans ally and a mother of a young daughter. I am in strong opposition of the bills before the committee today.

I believe that being in community with a diverse group of humans is deeply necessary and that how we build our relationships with others matters. My life and my daughter's life have been positively impacted by our trans friends. Whether through childcare they provided at times when I needed it the most, deep friendship, or being role models in our community. I am concerned for the safety of our Trans friends and of the long-term consequences I believe these bills will have for them and for the next generation of girls and students.

I am urging our legislators to take a step back and look at how this national political uproar, which claims to be about protecting girls, ultimately boils down to further marginalizing and discriminating against Trans folks. As a cis-woman who played sports in high school, I want to share a quote from a press conference from March where Rep. Smith stated "Girls are pitted against competitors in lopsided matches where basic biology stacks the odds against them, guaranteeing defeat and exposing them to real dangers, broken bones and smashed noses, all due to obvious differences in physical strength". I played sports through all 4 years of high school and I personally saw on my team at least 2 broken noses, our goalies' jaw smashed, ACL tears, and more, and those injuries were sustained from female opponents. I played against other girls who were easily twice my size on the basketball court. I only specify the opponents were female to reiterate that playing sports comes with a risk regardless of who is playing, all bodies are different, and everyone trains differently. Claiming that injuries will result from the small number of transgender girls playing is misleading, inaccurate, and harmful because of the narrative it continues to prop up that trans folks are dangerous. These claims have also consistently led to girls and women, maybe not unlike the ones I described playing against, being scrutinized, singled out, and humiliated after being accused of being transgender due to their physical makeup. These kinds of policies open the door for more harm against trans girls AND cis-female athletes.

I believe these policies that claim to protect young people actually pose more long term threats to them, and also to relationships between schools and caregivers and the community at large. These bills continue to advance the hateful and polarizing national rhetoric centered around policing trans people and their bodies and will only further sow distrust in the community. I believe we should be fostering a community of inclusion, teaching our young people how to engage more positively with a diverse world, and letting them know that they deserve better than to be constantly subjected to negative scrutiny by the adults in their community who are supposed to be role models and leaders.

Thank you Committee for considering my concerns for our trans friends and family, our schools and children, and communities. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills.

Jess Cooper
South Paris