

Testimony to the Judiciary Committee of the Maine State Legislature  
May 8, 2025

Good morning/afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for your service and for giving me the opportunity to testify.

My name is Adelle Welch and I live in Lewiston, Maine. I am here to speak in opposition to all the bills that the committee will hear today.

I didn't grow up playing sports but I grew up dancing ballet where our bodies were expected to be a certain definition of feminine: thin and not muscular especially in the arms and upper body. As I went through puberty these expectations became especially heavy, put onto me by both myself and my teachers. I was spending 5 days a week in front of a mirror surveilling my body and comparing it to my classmates, worrying that I was too muscular or too hairy to dance the parts that I wanted in the form that I loved.

In high school I started playing ice hockey and the girls on the team were so strong and fast and our collective focus on our athleticism and strength as a team drew my attention away from what my body looked like and towards what it could do. When I quit the team because I missed dance so much, I came back to ballet as proud of my strength as I was of my grace and artistry. My experience with team sports helped me come out of my own body image issues and helped me ignore the ridicule of my body by my dance peers and teachers, and society more generally.

As an adult, I've commiserated with a lot of my friends, especially my dancer and athlete friends, on their experience as preteens and teenagers worrying about their bodies being wrong for their sport or dance form. I worry that these bills will harm all young girls and all teenagers (trans and cis) as they become subject not only to their own teenage judgement of their changing bodies, but also subject to policing and surveillance of their bodies by their peers, mentors, coaches, teachers, parents and the government. Just this past weekend, a cis-woman in Boston was accosted in the bathroom by a hotel security guard, and her gender identity was questioned. By enforcing strict and false definitions of gender, we're subjecting kids to harmful questioning and judgement for being "too tall" "too short" "too hairy" "too muscular" or simply "not feminine enough". I found self confidence through sports, and I know we want to raise our kids to be proud of their strength and accepting of their bodies. These bills introduce unnecessary surveillance and harm to kids and all people of Maine. For these reasons please vote ought not to pass.