

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Testimony of Dr. Ryan Scallon

In Opposition to LDs 233, 868, 1002, 1134, 1704, 1002, 1337, 1432

Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary

May 8, 2025

Good morning. I am Dr. Ryan Scallon, Superintendent of Portland Public Schools.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you on pending legislation that would directly impact the rights, safety, and educational experiences of transgender and all youth.

Our schools have a responsibility to foster student well-being, dignity, and equal access to learning. Respect for students' names and pronouns, access to restrooms, and participation in extracurricular activities-including athletics - are foundational components of equal education.

For two decades, transgender students in Maine have participated in school life-including athletics-without issue. Girls and boys in Portland both have numerous opportunities to participate in athletics. Only now, with increased political attention, is this becoming a source of controversy.

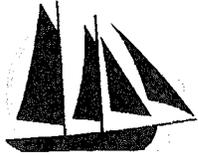
Let's be clear: blanket bans on participation are unnecessary and they are harmful to everyone. They send a message of exclusion reaching far beyond a single student or sport. They also open the door to harassment of any girl by others who assume she is transgender because of how she looks or plays. If there is a dispute, these bills lead to genital inspections to prove she is playing on the right team. This only deters girls' participation in sports.

Youth sports provides opportunities to build confidence, learn teamwork and communication skills, and grow through effort, practices, wins and losses. Sports are part of a healthy school experience and foster community and belonging. All students should have that opportunity.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has been clear in its guidance: "Schools should promote acceptance, inclusion, and legal protection for all children without fear of harassment, exclusion, or bullying because of gender expression."

In 2023, 38% of LGBTQ+ youth in Maine reported seriously considering suicide. That number rises even higher for transgender youth. We must support mental health in our youth, not make it worse by using the law to say they don't belong.

We need to follow advice from pediatricians and youth development experts—people trained in the science of child well-being—not politicians or polls.



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Decisions about youth athletics are best by coaches and athletic directors and informed by parents—not by sweeping legislation. These local decisions take into account individual students' capacities, team dynamics, and what's developmentally appropriate.

We urge the Legislature to vote ought not to pass on these bills.

Thank you.

Dr. Ryan Scallon