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Lewiston, ME
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Hello Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for your time. My name is Asher Havlin and I live in Lewiston and I'm transgender. I am opposed to all of the bills in front of you today, but I want to talk specifically about my experience with sports growing up.

When I was 14 and growing up as a girl, I got the opportunity to play on a boys soccer team. and might I add, I was one of the best players on the team. Sports was everything to me growing up- it was the escape I so desperately needed from my life. I was only used to playing on girls teams, having to wear a girls uniform, having to hang out with only girls on the team, and basically pretending to be a girl- the relief I felt on the boys team was euphoric. I could finally be comfortable, if even just while I played sports.

Honestly, it was one of the best things to happen to me. I could finally compete with teammates that allowed me to express and affirm who I really was. But more than that, it helped me feel like I belonged in my community, Like I was not an outsider, like I was excited to live. It helped shape who I am today.

Additionally, despite playing soccer on a boys team and being assigned female at birth- I was not concerned for my safety, nor were the adults around me.

Sports literally kept me alive during so many periods where I wanted to disappear- even now as an adult that holds true. I'd like to ask, what's more important than keeping young people alive? We are living in a time where trans kids are 2-2.5% more likely to experience depression and suicidal thoughts than their cis counterparts. A recent study by the Trevor project showed states that passed anti-transgender laws see up to a 72% increase in youth trans suicide attempts. Is that the environment we want to create for youth in our state?

I'd like us all to consider what we as a community would like to value. Would we like to value children being given small opportunities to feel at home in their bodies, schools, and communities? Or would we like to value exclusion and fear? Would we like to value creating safety for the children most at risk of violence and bullying? Or would we like to value archaic views of what constitutes a boy and what constitutes a girl. I for one know the Maine I want to live in. Please oppose all bills up for hearing today.

Thank you,

Asher Havlin