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May 8, 2025

Public Testimony Regarding LDs 233, 868, 1002, 1134, 1704

I would like to begin by thanking the Chairs Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn, along with the rest of the members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am speaking here today on behalf of Mabel Wadsworth Center. Mabel's is an independent feminist sexual and reproductive health center that has been providing care in Bangor since 1984. We are the only feminist health center in Maine, and one of only a handful in the country. Women have and always will be at the forefront of our mission. In all areas of our work, we seek to honor women's lives, trans and cis alike. We are privileged to stand with and for all women. As an organization that is well-known and held in high regard not only for the quality of care we provide but for our feminist values, we urge you to vote in opposition to these bills today.

Speaking both as an expert and as a former Maine high school athlete, I can say with confidence that every single one of these bills has been presented in bad faith and, contrary to the language they may use, seeks to harm Maine women and girls. The idea that those assigned male at birth have an inherent advantage in athletics over those assigned female at birth is a misogynistic trope. Sexual dimorphism is minimal in humans; we are not birds.

These bills would harm all Maine women and girls. As a Center that provides sexual and reproductive care, we know the importance of providing exams that are consensual and center people's autonomy. Banning trans girls and women from sports would open the door for anyone who thinks an athlete is "too tall" or "too strong" or simply "not dainty enough" to call for an invasive and traumatizing "gender check" in the form of a genital exam.

Trans people have always been here. Their presence in sports, in locker rooms, in bathrooms, at the grocery store, and anywhere else is not a threat to women's



safety. As a representative for a feminist health center and as a survivor of sexual assault, I can confidently say that bills such as these that seek to remove trans people from public spaces do not exist to keep women and girls safer. We at Mabel Wadsworth Center urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on this slate of anti-trans bills today. Thank you.



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### Public Testimony Regarding LDs 1337 and 1432

I would like to begin by thanking the Chairs Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn, along with the rest of the members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am speaking here today on behalf of Mabel Wadsworth Center. Mabel's is an independent feminist sexual and reproductive health center that has been providing care in Bangor since 1984. We are the only feminist health center in Maine, and one of only a handful in the country. Women have and always will be at the forefront of our mission. In all areas of our work, we seek to honor women's lives, trans and cis alike. We are privileged to stand with and for all women. As an organization that is well-known and held in high regard not only for the quality of care we provide but for our feminist values, we urge you to vote in opposition to these bills today.

The existence of transgender people is not a threat to the lives and wellbeing of cisgender people. Trans people are and always have been a part of our communities. Banning trans women and girls from shelters and sports does nothing to improve the safety of cis women and girls, and in fact causes harm to all women and girls. We know that when women and girls are subjected to violence, it is overwhelmingly at the hands of cis men. In fact, trans people are significantly more likely to be victims of violence than their cis counterparts, not perpetrators of said violence<sup>1</sup>.

Attempting to remove gender identity as a protected class under the Maine Human Rights Act demonstrates precisely why it is needed. Every single one of the bad faith bills attacking transgender people in front of you today demonstrates why that protection is so desperately needed. Trans people are a marginalized community that are convenient for those with hate in their hearts to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/ncvs-trans-press-release/>



scapegoat. Seeking to make it legal to discriminate against the trans community is, to put it gently, abhorrent.

Both of these bills seek to cause harm to Mainers, and for this reason, we at Mabel Wadsworth Center urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on them. Thank you.



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### Public Testimony Regarding LD 380

I would like to begin by thanking the Chairs Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn, along with the rest of the members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am speaking to you today as a representative of Mabel Wadsworth Center. Mabel's is an independent feminist sexual and reproductive health center that has been providing care in Bangor since 1984. One of our founding values that continues to guide our work more than 40 years since our founding is autonomy. We strongly believe in the right of all people to self-determination. Because of this, we at Mabel Wadsworth Center urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 380.

This bill, which began as an attack on Maine's Shield Law and was pivoted via an amendment to focus instead on attacking LD 535 from 2023, seeks to remove autonomy and access to safe, effective healthcare from transgender youth in Maine. Gender-affirming care has one of the highest satisfaction rates of any medical care available<sup>1</sup>. This care is essential<sup>2</sup> and life-saving<sup>3</sup>.

Not all youth in Maine are lucky enough to have parents that support and love them as they are. In an ideal world, all parents would prioritize the happiness and wellbeing of their children, including when it comes to accessing healthcare that has been proven to be safe and necessary. Unfortunately, that is not the case, and that is why two years ago we passed a law granting autonomy to 16- and 17-year-old trans Mainers. In those two years, society has not collapsed. None of the fear-mongering lies around the supposed dangers of supporting trans youth have come true. What has happened is trans youth have been able to exercise autonomy and access safe, necessary care under the guidance of experts. Access to this care has been proven to improve both short and long term health outcomes, both in regards to mental health and physical health. Frankly, this is

<sup>1</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2825195>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/116284/documents/HHRG-118-JU10-20230727-SD020.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(21\)00568-1/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(21)00568-1/fulltext)



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not surprising; people lead happier, healthier lives when they have the right to self-determination.

All Mainers deserve the right to autonomy and access to the care that is right for them. An attack on any Mainer's autonomy is an attack on all of ours. For this reason, we at Mabel Wadsworth Center urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 380. Thank you.