

SPORTS BILLS:

Greetings, *“Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee.”* Thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is t love smith, (they/them), I live in Cornish. I am here in opposition and disgust of the bills before the committee today.

In 2002, a recently separated, disabled veteran, I returned to Maine because I was kicked out of the Army for coming out as a lesbian during the Don't Ask, Don't Tell era. It is a miracle, and by the grace and support of queer community that I have not become a statistic. Let me tell you why.

I grew up in Burlington, Maine, raised by MAGA women for the pleasure of MAGA men. I am the only one in my family to serve in the military and that is important. I wasn't allowed to play competitive sports with boys in grade school. When I was 9 years old in 5th grade, the football coach got the cheerleading coach to physically remove me from the field when I insisted they let me try out for quarterback. She said, “You're embarrassing yourself. They are not going to let you play boys sports, young lady, not in this lifetime.”

As far as anyone knew, I was just a kid who wanted to play my favorite sports. I didn't understand why my brother could play but I couldn't when I was technically more competitive. I grew up in an alcoholic home. I desperately needed an expressive outlet. Without it, I turned to alcohol, drugs, sex to numb the pain of being prevented opportunities to express myself as I understood myself. The damage of these unnecessary barriers to my personal development is taking my lifetime to recover from. Is that what we want for queer kids or even adults in Maine?

Not one of these bills is about sports or bathrooms. This is a case of some bullies trying to reenact freedom to abuse people based on identity factors they fail to comprehend. Let's not roll back protections because a handful of adults still haven't learned how to share and play nice. Don't reward bad behavior with a legal pass. Uphold protections for Mainers regardless of gender identity.

Thank you.
t love smith

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Cornish, Maine
May 8, 2025

LD 1432: An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act

Greetings, "*Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee*. Thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is t love smith, (they/them), I live in Cornish. I am here in solidarity with all willing to stand between Maine kids and the recent incarnation of bullies. I am here in opposition and disgust of the bills before the committee today.

What kind of world are we returning to when we consider erasing kids from Human Rights Protections in Maine? I remember that world well because I grew up in it in the 80s & 90s, right here in Maine and in 2002, when gender identity and sexual orientation were added as protected classes under the Maine Civil Rights Act, I was a student and campus organizer for the Maine Won't Discriminate Campaign at USM, where I now attend graduate school.

The MWD Act was the first in the country to include legal language to protect me, my family and my community from the harms of ignorant sexuality and gender discrimination. Elbow-to-elbow with my peers of 18-35 year olds, we faced seething, pathetic hordes of hateful members of the Christian Civil League, with their signs spewing, *God Hates You & You're going to hell, sinner!!*"

It's written in the bill. An act to **REMOVE CONSIDERATION** of Gender Identity? It's intention is for the allowance of inconsiderate gender-based behavior. What I think the authors of this bill fail to admit is how genderphobia injures everyone in community with a gender outside of whatever is popular.

I grew up in Burlington, Maine, raised by MAGA women for the pleasure of MAGA men. I am the only one in my family to serve in the military and that is important to note. The army discharged me when I came out as a lesbian. In the military, not only was I not allowed to admit who I loved, I was also discouraged from expressing my gender. I wasn't allowed to cut my hair short or to wear military uniforms that didn't hug and pronounce my feminine features. There were jobs I wasn't qualified for in the military simply because of my assigned gender and there were separate PT test qualifications for men and women.

Due to my assigned gender, I faced regular harassment, assault based on the definitions assigned to my body by society and the lack of protections. This isn't exclusive to queer bodies assigned female at birth. Strict definitions of gender make all of us vulnerable. We know this, because we have already lived that reality.

Now is the time to double down on protections for all Mainers assigned a gender at birth and our right to express our gender with autonomy. We ought to be increasing protections not revoking them.

Thank you.