

**TESTIMONY OF SARAH A. McDANIEL,
PRESIDENT OF PFLAG PORTLAND MAINE CHAPTER
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 233, 868, 1002, 1134, and 1704
Judiciary Committee, Room 438, May 8, 2025 9:30 a.m.**

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for holding a hearing on these important bills, all of which I urge you to oppose.

My name is Sarah A. McDaniel. I currently reside in New Gloucester, formerly of Gorham. In my career I am a land conservation attorney practicing at my own lawfirm in North Yarmouth. Most importantly for today's hearing, I am mother of a transgender son who now lives in Portland and am the President of PFLAG's Portland Maine Chapter.

WHO IS PFLAG?

When my son first came out to me a decade ago, the summer before he started at Gorham High School, I turned to PFLAG for education and support on this unanticipated parenting journey.

If you are not familiar with PFLAG, they are the country's oldest ally group, begun in 1972 when a mother marched in the first New York pride parade in support of her gay son – a monumental show of love. **That grew a movement of parents, friends and family of LGBTQ+ people working to protect their loved ones from discrimination.** Fifty years later, PFLAG is now a national nonprofit with staffed offices in DC that works across the country by a series of local volunteer-run chapters, currently numbering in the hundreds.

PFLAG Portland is currently Maine's only active chapter, with a focus on southern Maine. Other chapters have ebbed and flowed with volunteer capacity in Houlton and in Waterville but the greater Portland chapter has been steady and active in Maine since 1995. Since covid, our chapter's monthly support meetings have stayed on Zoom as we are better able to help families from all across the state, including those who cannot easily get into downtown Portland.

I've been on the board for about 7 years, president for the last 4. In this time, we have been able to **serve on the order of 400 Maine families.** A large proportion of these are families seeking to better understand and support their transgender loved ones, often youth.

In addition to our monthly peer support groups, we have been invited by faith leaders to speak at their churches and help them becoming more welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. We

join panels on LGBTQ+ issues when invited by school groups. And we are a voice for parents when policies that may harm their children are moving through the legislature, like today.

One point that I hope you understand as you listen to all the testimony today is that **parents of transgender youth are scared for the safety of their children**. This committee has heard the anti-doxxing bills, so you are aware of the real dangers Maine children face in this increasingly contentious political environment. The bravery and courage of the people who come today to testify in person, or who share their stories with you in writing should be applauded. Yet for everyone who speaks up, there are many more parents, teachers, friends, youth who also want these bills to fail, but are not able to share their identifying information to vocally oppose the bills out of fear of their families being targeted for violence.

PFLAG is here to speak for them.

The bills before you this morning are **primarily anti-trans sports bills** (233, 868, 1134) but they also include anti-trans **bathroom language** and reach locker rooms and all gender-specified places in public education (868 and 1704), and finally one would **prevent teachers from using a student's preferred name and gender** (1002).

THE ANTI-TRANS SPORTS BILLS NEEDLESSLY DISCRIMINATE AGAINST TRANS GIRLS

To justify discrimination, these bills are founded in the harmful presumption that *any boy* is inherently superior to *any girl in any sport*. That couldn't be farther from the truth.

Opponents highlight the few occasions where a trans woman athlete has won one particular race/match/game. But even these high-profile cases do not support their concerns as those same trans athletes also fail to win many other races/matches/games. Notably, their examples do not have relevance to the context of younger kids playing sports, but **these bills before you today would impose the same standards on elementary school kids as on college kids, and are not sport-specific**.

Success in sports isn't dictated by "birth sex" or by gender. In addition to physical prowess which varies widely across individual humans, more critical elements of sports success include:

- access to resources (equipment, camps, special trainings);
- devotion to practice;

- quality of coaching;
- good sleep & nutrition;
- family and friends support & encouragement

– all combine to make each human a unique mix of talent and skills.

These bills tell all girls that that “boys” are inherently “better” at “sports” than “girls”. That is not true, and that is a harmful message to send to all our girl athletes, and also to our boys.

All parents of athletes want their children to have a fair playing field, but these bills do not actually address the challenges that have continued to plague women’s sports.

Addressing the lack of equal quality sports facilities for girl’s teams, preventing sexual assaults by coaches, and working for equal compensation and media coverage will do much more to advance women’s sports than any ban on transgender athletes.

TRANS ATHLETES ARE NOT A THREAT; POLICING GENDER IS THE THREAT.

One of most troubling aspects of these bills is how their enforcement will hurt all girls. To be enforced, someone must check the genitals of *all girls seeking to play*, to confirm if they qualify for a girl sports team—a massive violation of privacy and safety.

Alternately, select investigations following an accusation carries a strong risk of vigilante attacks that can target *any girl* who doesn’t conform to an outdated stereotype of feminine appearance. Your daughters who are ‘too tall’ or ‘too strong’ or choose to dress ‘manly’ can be subject to intrusive body-checks if challenged by anyone who may want them off the team for any reason.

This reinforces false notions of femininity not only against trans girls, but ANY girl suspected or alleged to be different. This harms all girls.

Importantly, as to LD 868, 1134 and 1704, these inspections are needed even outside the sports context. Elementary and middle school gym locker rooms, anyone attending a school play needing a bathroom break at intermission. I can tell you that you do NOT want my big, handsome heavily-bearded son walking into a girls bathroom. Yet that is where these bills will require him to go. Subjecting him to a genital inspection does not protect girls. Subjecting your tom-boy daughters to genital inspections does not protect girls.

I have heard that focusing on birth certificates is a way around this issue. That is not enough. Birth certificates are governed by state law in the state where a person is born. Some states make it impossible for transgender or intersex people to amend their birth certificate, while some are accommodating. Some families may want to wait before making a change to their child's gender marker, but if that delay will prevent their child from playing sports it can force families to expedite what should be a carefully considered decision. As a result, focusing on the birth certificate is not a reliable way to enforce these discriminatory laws, and so they must be defeated.

TRANS YOUTH DESERVE TO PLAY, WITHOUT STIGMA, AT ALL AGES

The simplistic cry of 'no men in women's sports' is a red herring. These bills address elementary through college age, so we are not talking about "men." We are talking about transgender girls. Public high school and elementary sports should not be held to exacting standards of elite athletics.

Youth sports is for leadership, teamwork, fitness, and fun. The benefits of fitness, leadership, team building, and sportsmanship that high school and elementary school sports provide should continue to be available to all Maine students, as our laws now allow.

Our trans youth would like nothing more than for their gender to be irrelevant. They want to spend their time, as all youth do, relaxing with their friends, playing sports, playing games, focusing on their school work.

SCHOOLS SHOULD BE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE STUDENTS CAN FOCUS ON ACADEMICS

The first thing I did when my son came out was to make sure his high school teachers would use his preferred name and correct gender. I did this so that he could just focus on his studies during the school day. But it was more than a year before the time was right for us as a family to legally change his name and gender-marker. **If LD 1002 was in effect, he would have been misgendered and dead-named during that year, his mental health would have suffered and his ability to focus during the school day on his academics would be impaired.** So LD 1002 could have the unintended consequence of making families move forward with legal name and gender-marker changes before those families are ready.

Trans youth are not a threat; policing gender is the threat. I request everyone on this Committee to vote NO on LD 233, 868, 1002, 1134, and 1704; these bills OUGHT NOT TO PASS.

I am pleased to answer questions today or attend a workshop if additional information will be helpful. Attached as Appendix I to this testimony is additional information provided by PFLAG National on the issue of sports scholarships. Attached as Appendix II to this testimony is additional testimony of one PFLAG member, who is a public school educator, and who asked me to share her testimony with you while preserving her anonymity for the safety of her family and students.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah A. McDaniel

President, PFLAG Portland Maine Chapter

APPENDIX 1

Information provided by PFLAG National in response to requests for information about the impact of transgender athletes on scholarships and protective factors for transgender youth. In this Appendix 1, reference to "I" is the author Patrick Cochran who is the Advocacy and Policy Engagement Manager for PFLAG National. Hyperlinks to source materials (blue underlined in printed copy) were provided to Representative Kuhn via email on 5/6/25 and can be found in an uploaded version of this testimony.

- **Scholarships:** There has only been *one documented case* (which was not in Maine) of a transgender student athlete getting a scholarship that I could find: The New York Times Magazine recently reported that Blaire Fleming, the Division I volleyball player from San Jose State University, received a scholarship.
 - There was one other case where a trans athlete was offered a Division I scholarship, but after backlash from Riley Gaines, the offer was rescinded. To my knowledge, no other trans athletes have received athletic scholarships.
 - Within the NCAA, Division I offers some full athletic scholarships. Division II offers some partial athletic scholarships, and Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships. Ivy League schools, while part of DI sports, do not offer athletic scholarships (mentioning this because Lia Thomas -- a very famous example of a trans athlete -- was an Ivy League swimmer).
 - **It is highly unlikely any trans athlete would ever be offered a scholarship moving forward:** there is no situation in which a coach would recruit a player who is unable to play for their team, and **with the new Feb. 6 update to the NCAA policy, transgender women are barred from participating on women's teams in**

the NCAA. The same is true for NAIA, which does offer athletic scholarships, but has banned transgender athletes from play.

- **Protective Factors:**

- The 19th news reported on how bills like LD 868 make trans youth feel unsafe:
 - **86% of transgender and nonbinary youth say recent debates around anti-trans bills have negatively impacted their mental health;** as a result of these policies and debates in the last year, **45% of trans youth experienced cyberbullying, and nearly 1 in 3 reported not feeling safe to go to the doctor or hospital when they were sick or injured.**
 - **75% of LGBTQ youth say that both anti-LGBTQ hate crimes and threats of violence against LGBTQ spaces often give them stress or anxiety.**
- A 2021 study by the Trevor Project found that LGBTQ+ students, and particularly trans students, are disproportionately bullied at school:
 - **20% of all high school students reported being bullied in person and 15% reported cyber bullying. This is compared to 52% of LGBTQ+ students who reported any bullying, and 61% of transgender students who reported any bullying.**
 - **Bullying increases suicidality among students.**
 - **Schools that affirmed LGBTQ+ students significantly lowered bullying.**
- A 2019 study looked into the relationship between school restroom and locker room restrictions and sexual assault risk among transgender youth:
 - **Trans youth whose restroom and locker room use was restricted were more likely to experience sexual assault compared with those without restrictions**
 - **Trans boys were 26% more likely to be assaulted when their bathroom and locker room use was restricted**
 - **Trans girls were almost 250% more likely to be assaulted when their bathroom and locker room use was restricted.**

- **Inclusive Athletic policies:** Having high school athletic policies that are inclusive is helpful to retention of all girls in sports: According to research and data from organizations like the Center for American Progress, states with transgender-inclusive policies tend to see an increase in girls' participation in sports, with no negative impact on female athletic participation rates; in contrast, states with trans-exclusionary policies often see a decrease in girls' sports involvement.

APPENDIX II

Testimony written by a PFLAG member who is an educator and is scared of repercussions in her classroom and to her family if she shared her name and hometown publicly. Her words are appended here without any editing from me:

To whom it may concern and in being honest this should concern EVERYONE!

As a public educator in the State of Maine, I know that these bills would hurt Maine schools and communities

Schools should create a supportive environment where every student can receive an education and participate in school activities. ALL SHOULD be welcome. I try to create a welcoming environment in my classroom, where all are accepted and respected. We have a poster that says " Be KIND for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about". I truly feel, deep down to my core, that this motto should be shouted from the mountain tops, why would we want anything else, but to feel loved, accepted and respected, all of which can be done even if someone doesn't fully understand someone else's journey... compassion should be number 1.

This ideology of compassion also should be part of extracurricular activities, all are welcome to explore, join in and be part of the team. As a former athlete, some of my most favorite memories are from times on teams, wins and losses, how to work together and support one another. Participating in sports teaches important values like perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork. We should want more young people to play sports, not put up barriers for girls across Maine that subject them to invasive interrogation or make them risk public ridicule.

I agree fully that these bans would invite any person to call for an invasive or traumatizing "gender check" on any girl who wants to play sports if they think she is "too tall" or "too strong."

Bans embolden spectators, community members, and fellow competitors to bully and harass girls by accusing them of being trans. If these bills pass, they will become another weapon for bullies to use against girls in Maine. THIS SHOULD NOT EVEN BE THOUGHT OF AS OK. ESPECIALLY at younger grades, levels etc. again we should be teaching, encouraging and modeling acceptance and team work ... not working against these ideas.

And I feel this could only be the start, targeting an incredibly vulnerable population, seems like an easy place to begin with "bully" like tactics, but this seems to only be the tip of the iceberg and other minority groups will be next on the list for scrutiny, discrimination etc. and in the current climate of our nation... the list of marginalized groups is LARGE and includes MANY. If this type of action is tolerated now the snowball effect will be catastrophic and our lives will NOT be in our control. This IS NOT what this country should stand for nor tolerate and in my heart of hearts I will hold hope that when we are LOUD and CREATE "GOOD TROUBLE" we rise up and LOVE, HOPE, and "LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL" will indeed WIN.

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Emma Lazarus

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!!!

Anonymous. Maine Resident and Proud Public Educator in the State of Maine.