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May 7, 2025

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

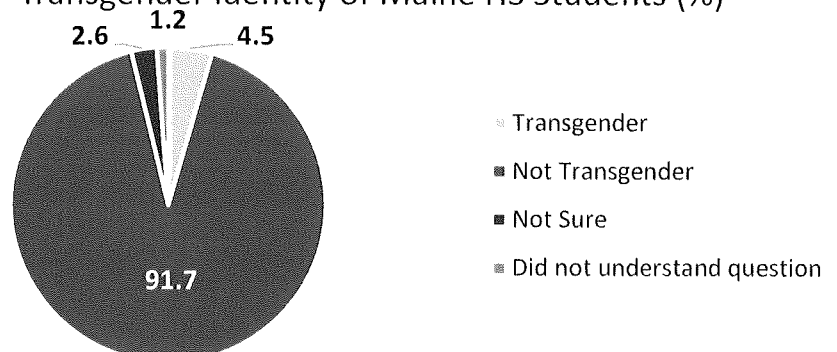
My name is Dr. Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland, a pediatric hospitalist in Lewiston, and I serve on the board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP) as the chair of our Advocacy committee. The Maine AAP is a professional organization representing 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists working together to further our mission *to improve the lives of children and adolescents in Maine*. We are deeply concerned about the harmful consequences these bills would have, particularly for transgender youth and families, and ask that you vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 233, 868, 1002, 1134, and 1704.

These bills as a group address a diverse set of topics in relation to transgender youth. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children and adolescents, including those who are transgender or gender-diverse, be supported in their gender identity through developmentally appropriate, affirming care. This includes the use of chosen names and pronouns, access to restrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their gender identity, and safe, inclusive housing and school environments.¹ As several of these bills address such issues, which we refer to as "social transition," I would ask that you refer to my colleague Dr. Deborah Hagler's testimony focused on those aspects of these bills. In this testimony, I will specifically address the issue of school sports participation.

Demographics

First, to set the stage, it's important to understand the demographics these bills would be affecting. The Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey², as many of you are familiar, is a biennial survey of Maine students in grades 5 through 12. The data referenced in this testimony will be focused on high school students in the most recent 2023 data set, and the chart below shows the percentage of Maine high school students who identify as transgender.

MIYHS - Transgender Identity of Maine HS Students (%)



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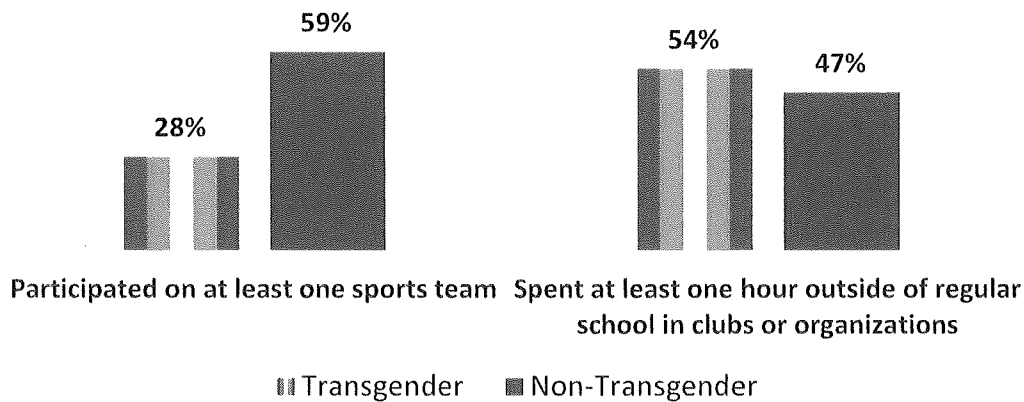
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Additionally, the MIYHS also assessed student participation rates in extracurricular activities, and this data was able to be stratified by transgender identity. The data indicates that transgender high school students are less likely than their cis-gendered peers to participate in sports when compared to participation in other clubs & organizations. We suspect the stigma and public attention focused on this issue, especially in recent years, may be exacerbating this finding.

MIYHS Team Sports vs. Club/Organization Participation

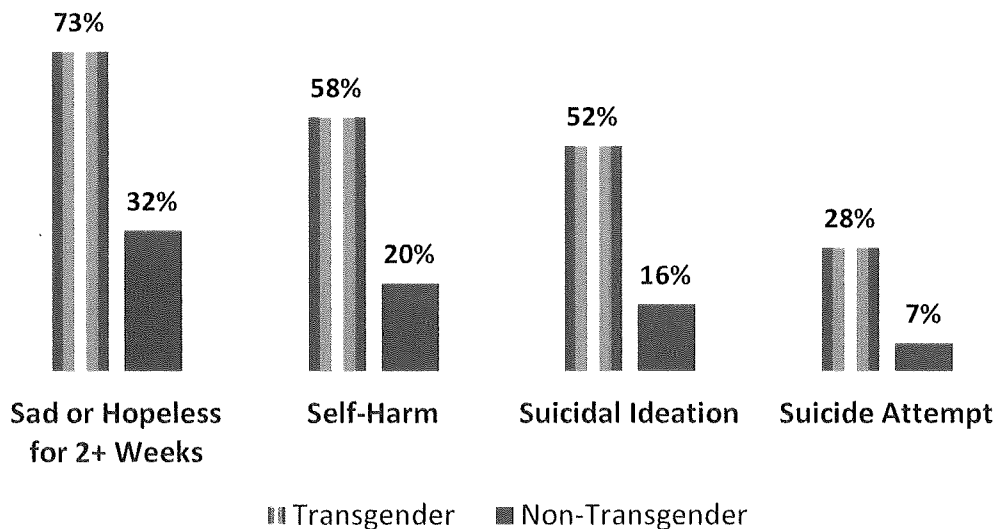


In all, approximately 1.3% of Maine high school students are youth who identify as transgender, and who also participate on a sports team.

Mental Health Disparities for Transgender Youth

Transgender youth face alarming rates of depression and suicide. According to The Trevor Project's 2024 National Survey, 46% of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the past year.³ The MIYHS data indicates significant disparities in mental health outcomes for transgender high school students here in Maine, as visualized in the chart below:

MIYHS Mental Health Outcomes - High School



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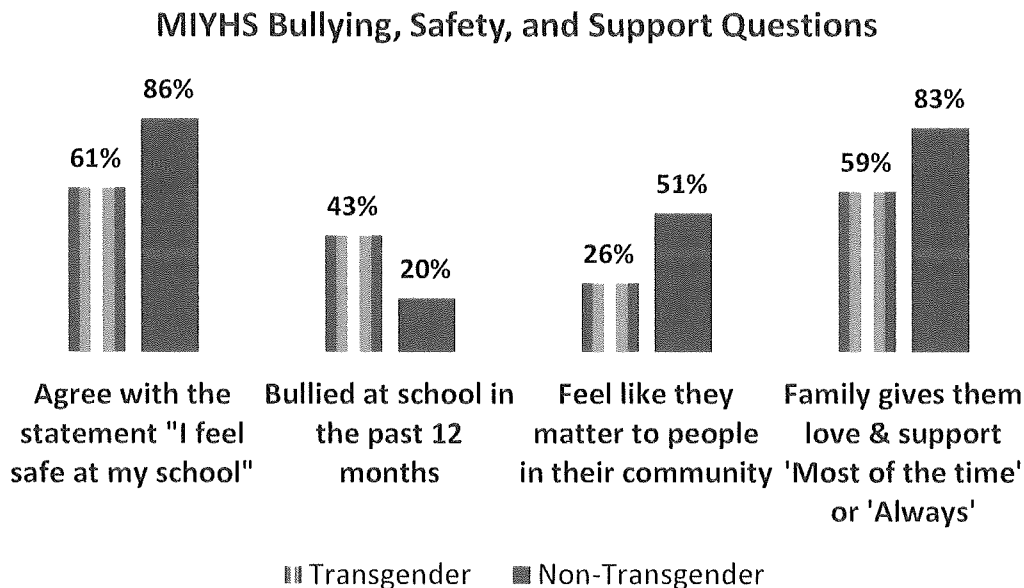
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The AAP's policy statement *Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents*¹ explains the mental health disparities as follows:

*"There is no evidence that risk for mental illness is inherently attributable to one's identity of TGD. Rather, it is believed to be multifactorial, stemming from an internal conflict between one's appearance and identity, limited availability of mental health services, low access to healthcare providers with expertise in caring for youth who identify as TGD, **discrimination, stigma, and social rejection**"*

These effects are borne out in the MIYHS data:



Feelings of safety, "mattering", and family support are some of the strongest protective factors against mental health challenges in adolescents. Inclusion in sports and school communities can also be a protective factor against depression and anxiety. Participation in team sports improves mental health outcomes, teaches kids about teamwork and resilience, and helps to build a foundation for an active and healthy life. Denying access to sports is just one additional way these vulnerable youth are told they don't belong, and that message is deeply harmful.

The Fairness Question

Supporters of the legislation seeking to prohibit transgender girls participating in girls' sports may invoke concerns about fairness, and we understand why. Fairness is a value we all care about. It's what makes sports meaningful in the first place: every player giving their best, every team playing by the rules, and every child having an equal chance to participate.

There's a perception, amplified by headlines and social media, that trans girls have an inherent and overwhelming advantage in athletics. But that perception doesn't align with reality. Competitive advantage in youth sports can be shaped by countless factors: access to coaching, family income, early training, and yes, sometimes biology. But to assume that all (or even most) transgender girls participating in sports have a biological advantage over cis-gendered girls would be an incorrect generalization. Rather than addressing how to handle situations involving athletes who are performing at the highest level of their sports where a biological advantage may play a role (a minority of cases), these bills seek to prohibit any transgender female athlete from participating in sports in a way that aligns with her gender identity.

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We understand some parents may feel uncertain about this issue. They want to protect opportunities for their daughters, and they worry that inclusion might come at a cost. But the truth is, we don't have to choose between fairness and compassion. We can protect the integrity of girls' sports while also ensuring that no child is excluded. These are not competing values, they're shared goals.

Unintended Consequences

Efforts to ban transgender youth from participating in school sports or using facilities aligned with their gender identity create a host of unintended consequences that extend far beyond the individuals they target. These policies often require teachers, coaches, and administrators to scrutinize and question the gender of any girl who is perceived not to "look" or "act" feminine enough, placing all girls, transgender and cisgender alike, at risk of invasive questioning, humiliation, and exclusion. The mere suspicion of someone's gender identity could be weaponized in competitive or hostile environments, undermining the safety and dignity of all students.

Moreover, in practice, enforcing such bans often leads to deeply invasive and unethical demands for verification of a student's sex or gender. This could include requiring medical records, blood tests, or even physical examinations, an *unacceptable* violation of a young person's privacy and bodily autonomy. No child should be subjected to such scrutiny simply to participate in school sports. Rather than promoting fairness, these policies open the door to surveillance, trauma, and discrimination, and they have no place in a school system committed to protecting the rights and well-being of all students.

As physicians, we are trained to understand nuance, to weigh evidence, and to consider the full context of a child's life. We avoid making blanket assumptions about our patients. We meet them where they are. This is the same approach we should take with policies that affect kids, especially policies as personal as whether they're allowed to participate in a sport with their peers.

Let's not lose sight of what youth sports are really about: teamwork, resilience, and building a foundation for an active & healthy life. These are lessons every child deserves to learn, regardless of gender identity.

Maine should not turn its back on children and families who need protection the most. LD 233, 868, 1002, 1134, and 1704 do not actually protect women, girls, or families, but they do enshrine discrimination, invite stigma, and increase harm to a vulnerable population.

As pediatricians, we urge you to reject these bills and affirm Maine's commitment to inclusion, equity, and the health of every child and family in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Anderson" followed by a stylized flourish.

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Advocacy Chair, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

References

¹ Jason Rafferty et al., Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, Committee on Adolescence, Section on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health and Wellness; Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents. *Pediatrics* October 2018; 142 (4): e20182162. 10.1542/peds.2018-2162. Retrieved from: <https://tinyurl.com/584rxw2v>

² 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. High School Detailed Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/2023-results>

³ Nath, R., Matthews, D.D., DeChants, J.P., Hobaica, S., Clark, C.M., Taylor, A.B., Muñoz, G. (2024). 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People. West Hollywood, California: The Trevor Project. Retrieved from: www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024

⁴ Drescher J; Haller E; American Psychiatric Association Caucus of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Psychiatrists. *Position Statement on Discrimination Against Transgender and Gender Variant Individuals*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association; 2012

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May 7, 2025

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to LD 1337 and LD 1432

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Dr. Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland, a pediatric hospitalist in Lewiston, and I serve on the board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP) as the chair of our Advocacy committee. The Maine AAP is a professional organization representing 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists working together to further our mission *to improve the lives of children and adolescents in Maine*. We are deeply concerned about the harmful consequences these bills would have, particularly for transgender youth and families, and ask that you vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1377 and LD 1432.

Opposition to LD 1337: An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-Sex Shelters

LD 1337 would create unnecessary and harmful carve-outs in the Maine Human Rights Act that target transgender women under the guise of protecting cisgender women in shelters and sports. These changes are both misguided and dangerous.

1. Transgender women are not a threat to safety in shelters.

The bill implies that the inclusion of transgender women in women's shelters poses a danger to cisgender residents. This assumption is unsupported by evidence. In fact, transgender people are far more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. A 2020 meta-analysis in the American Journal of Public Health found that transgender individuals were 1.7 times more likely to experience any form of intimate partner violence victimization compared with cisgender individuals, and were more than twice as likely to experience physical or sexual intimate partner violence (2.2 and 2.5 times, respectively).¹

Excluding transgender women from emergency shelter not only denies them critical support, but puts them at greater risk of harm, homelessness, and death.

2. The bill's sports provision will harm girls and women—especially transgender girls.

LD 1337 amends educational nondiscrimination protections in a way that invites schools to exclude transgender girls from participating in school sports aligned with their gender identity. This exclusion undermines the mental and physical health of transgender youth, depriving them of belonging, connection, and opportunities for healthy development.

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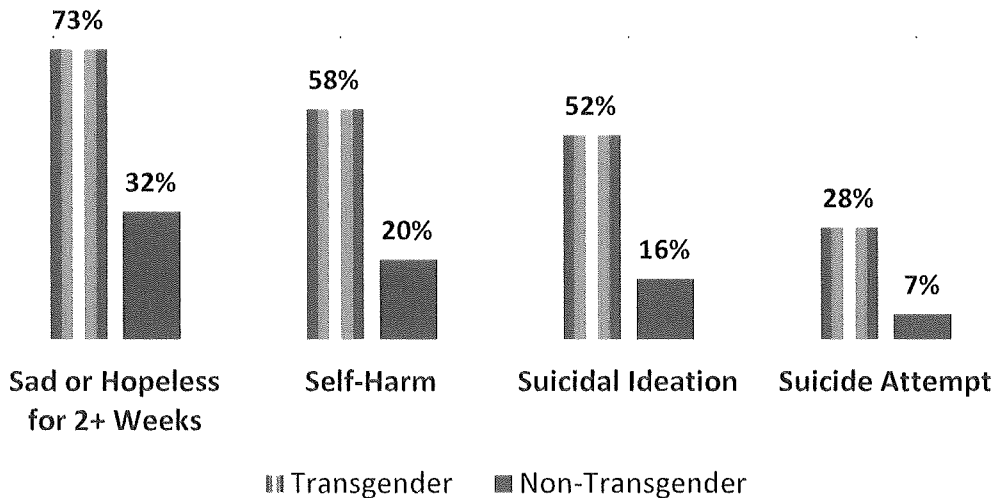
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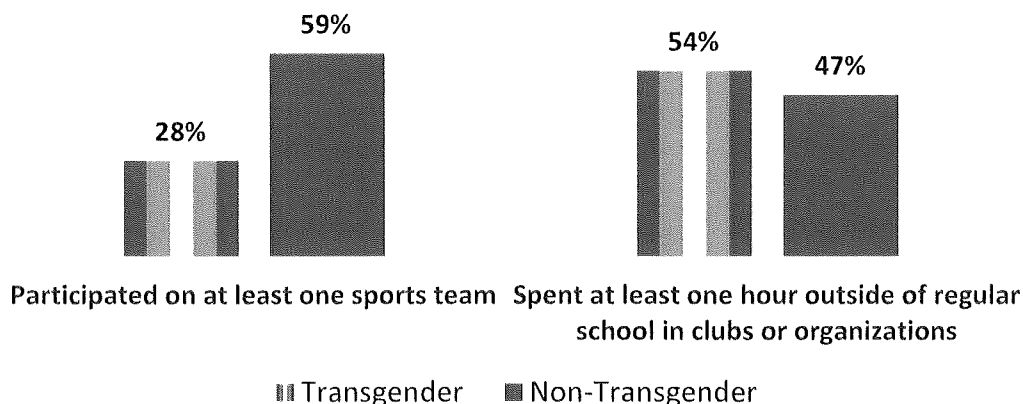
Transgender youth already face alarming rates of depression and suicide. According to The Trevor Project's 2024 National Survey, 46% of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the past year.² The 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey³ (MIYHS) indicates significant disparities in mental health outcomes for transgender high school students, as visualized in the chart below:

MIYHS Mental Health Outcomes - High School



Inclusion in sports and school communities can be a protective factor against these outcomes. Participation in team sports improves mental health outcomes, teaches kids about teamwork and resilience, and helps to build a foundation for an active and healthy life. However, the MIYHS data indicates that transgender high school students are reluctant to participate in sports, despite similar levels of participation in other clubs & organizations as their cis-gendered peers. We suspect the stigma and public attention focused on this issue, especially in recent years, may be exacerbating this finding.

MIYHS Team Sports vs. Club/Organization Participation



Denying access to sports isn't about fairness, it's about exclusion. It tells transgender kids they don't belong, and that message is deeply harmful.

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

This bill proposes to remove gender identity entirely from the Maine Human Rights Act, erasing one of the essential protections for transgender adults and children in our state.

1. Legal protections matter.

The Maine Human Rights Act rightly recognizes gender identity as a protected class. Removing these protections would invite discrimination in schools, employment, housing, and health care, with especially dire consequences for vulnerable youth and families.

Pediatricians routinely care for transgender and gender-diverse youth who experience bullying, isolation, and exclusion from activities because of their identity. Legal protections under the Human Rights Act are often the only safeguard these children and families have to ensure equal treatment and dignity.

2. The health consequences are real.

Major medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics⁴, the American Medical Association⁵, and the American Psychiatric Association⁶, support affirming care and nondiscrimination protections for transgender individuals. Discrimination, whether legal or informal, has been shown to worsen mental health outcomes and increase the risk of suicide, substance use, and school dropout.

LD 1432 sends a dangerous message: that transgender Mainers are not worthy of equal protection under the law.

In Conclusion

Maine should not turn its back on children and families who need protection the most. LD 1337 and LD 1432 do not actually protect women, girls, or families, but they do enshrine discrimination, invite stigma, and increase harm to a vulnerable population.

As pediatricians, we urge you to reject these bills and affirm Maine's commitment to inclusion, equity, and the health of every child and family in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Anderson DO".

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Advocacy Chair, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

References

- ¹ Sarah M. Peitzmeier et al. Reisner: Intimate Partner Violence in Transgender Populations: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Prevalence and Correlates. *American Journal of Public Health* 110, e1_e14, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305774>
- ² Nath, R., Matthews, D.D., DeChants, J.P., Hobaica, S., Clark, C.M., Taylor, A.B., Muñoz, G. (2024). 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People. West Hollywood, California: The Trevor Project. Retrieved from: www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024
- ³ 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. High School Detailed Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/2023-results>
- ⁴ Jason Rafferty et al., Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, Committee on Adolescence, Section on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health and Wellness; Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents. *Pediatrics* October 2018; 142 (4): e20182162. 10.1542/peds.2018-2162. Retrieved from: <https://tinyurl.com/584rxw2v>
- ⁵ Policy: Support of Human Rights and Freedom H-65.965 American Medical Association. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7ca2vf>
- ⁶ Position Statement on Discrimination Against Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals. American Psychiatric Association. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8hfmv6>