

**Testimony on LD 233: An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding is Provided to the School**

Mr. Chairman, Rep. Campbell and Committee members, my name is Carol Sherburne. I live in Dexter and I am here to speak in opposition to LD 233. This is the first time I have ever come to address Maine legislators.

I am a 73 year old grandmother of four and I have recently discovered the profound meaning behind the phrase, "It doesn't matter, until it does." With a grandchild who is transgender, this suddenly means a great deal to me.

First of all, I do NOT believe this piece of legislation is actually about the safety of girls in sports. In my opinion, it IS about discrimination toward a limited, marginalized segment of our population. Furthermore, I believe that it IS about falling in line and smartly into lock-step with the abusive, intolerant policies of the current administration in Washington, D.C. With the glaring, urgent needs of Inflation, Food Insecurity, Homelessness, Poverty and our Health Care Crisis...it is hard for me to fathom why you would think that this is one of THE issues that most needs Legislative attention.

Let's reasonably examine the facts.

- 1) There are currently TWO female trans athletes participating in high school sports in Maine. That is two in approximately 45,000.
- 2) Between 2013 and 2021 the Maine Principals' Association heard from 56 trans athletes wishing to participate on a high school sports team that was consistent with their gender identity. Fifty-six athletes among over 400,000 Maine high school athletes. Of those 56 cases only four were trans girls.
- 3) This is obviously NOT one of Maine's most pressing issues.

I was a middle school teacher in public schools for nearly thirty years. I have a Masters Degree in Middle Level Education. From first hand observation I can tell you that it is an incorrect assumption to think that all adolescent males have a body type that would be intimidating and/or physically endangering to an adolescent female. Adolescents, which include boys in high school, have body types that are all over the spectrum. I have seen boys with slender, delicate bodies as well as girls who can take down their peers decisively on the wrestling mat.

I hope you will agree that you would never vote on a piece of legislation affecting Maine farmers or foresters or fishermen without talking to those living these jobs about the issue and making sure you understand all the facets of the problem prior to making a decision one way or the other. At least that seems to me to be the way decisions should be made.

So I ask you: how many trans people have you spoken to about this issue? How many articles or books have you read on the subject? Have you listened to documentaries, interviews or podcasts on the subject of transgender youth? Do you understand gender dysmorphia and the devastating effects this can have on some trans children? Do you realize that there is an

incredible risk of suicide among transgender youth? Depending on the study, the country or the wording, the statistics report that 41-64% of trans youth consider or attempt suicide compared to 4-12% of the average for all youth ( see The Trevor Project 2021). If you have not done these things aren't you making a blind, uninformed decision based simply on how you feel about the transgender issue?

Adolescence is an exciting and stressful time when children are experiencing accelerated changes in their bodies and their brains. Physical, intellectual, psychological and social challenges are happening to them at a rapid fire pace. Considering the many challenges inherently faced by adolescents, I have awestruck respect for a trans boy or girl who steps up and faces the potential judgement of their peers to say, "This is who I am and I would like to participate in a sport as my authentic self."

Finally, I agree that participation of transgender males in sports programs designated for females is an issue that should be addressed, but it is one that should be addressed on a case by case basis as the MPA has done for the past **twelve years**. It is NOT an issue that needs to be addressed by a broad, legislative prohibition.

We all just want to belong. We all just want to know that we matter. We all want and deserve to be respected as individuals. This bill targets a small minority of our population and takes away respect and individuality from these young people. As a grandmother, I cannot be silent about what I see as political points being scored on the backs, and perhaps even on the lives, of children. Therefore, I urge you to vote NO on LD 233.

Thank you.