

**Testimony before the Maine State Legislature**

**LD 2239- An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex**

**Position: In favor**

Good morning, my name is Julia Deitrick, and I live in Bristol, Maine. I became involved in the Girls Sports issue in February of last year after learning more about how policies regarding biological sex sports participation was affecting girls like me in the state of Maine.

I am here today in support of LD 2239 because I believe that designating school sports participation and facilities based on biological sex helps ensure fairness and safety in women's and girls' athletics. I also would like to address concerns regarding how this issue is being presented to voters. I believe that Secretary of State Shenna Bellows has altered the wording of the referendum question in a way that could make it appear unfavorable or confusing to the public. The Secretary of State's role in the referendum process is to receive and review petition submissions, verify signatures, and draft the ballot question. It is her job to word the referendum questions clearly, accurately, and without bias which the original question follows, and drafted question by her does not.

The Secretary of State has now altered the proposed question to include items not previously included. According to the proposed question wording it is to be designated by gender but, there is an important distinction between the terms "sex" and "gender." In this context, sex refers to biological characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive anatomy at birth. Gender, on the other hand, is often understood as a personal and social identity. This distinction is central to the intent of LD 2239, which focuses on biological sex.

Clear and accurate wording on a ballot question is essential to ensure that voters understand what they are being asked to decide. When language is altered after the petition process there is now a change to the original petition that does not reflect what the Maine state voters signed in favor of.

This issue matters deeply to me, not only as a student but as a young woman who understands the opportunities that sports can provide. I have seen firsthand the dedication, effort, and determination girls put into improving themselves and striving to succeed on a fair and level playing field.

It is important that we also consider the younger athletes who will follow—middle and elementary school girls who deserve the same opportunities I have had. They should be able to trust that their hard work will be evaluated fairly and that the spaces they use respect their privacy and safety.

We cannot afford to lose the progress that women have worked so hard to achieve. The longer action is delayed, the greater the risk to future opportunities for girls. Leadership means doing what's right, not what's easy. You have a chance to stand on the right side of history — to honor the legacy of those who fought to pass Title IX, and to show every young woman in this community that her rights and her potential matter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

