

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

My name is Allen Cornwall. I am from Scarborough, Maine, and I am here in support of LD 2239, "An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex."

As a former pole vault coach and official, I have had the privilege of working with both girls and boys. I am also the father of a daughter and a son who competed as high school athletes in Maine and went on to compete at the Division I college level.

Coaching girls is different from coaching boys. Boys often carry an innate sense of confidence regardless of skill level. Many girls, even highly talented ones, struggle with self-confidence. This isn't a call for attention—it's a genuine belief that they are not good enough. That's why sports matter so much.

There is nothing more rewarding than watching a girl who may be considered "non-athletic" show up to every practice and, at her final meet of the season, clear a new height. The pride and joy on her face is unforgettable. Those moments build confidence, resilience, and self-worth. Each new height cleared becomes a foundation for future success—not just in sports, but in life.

This is why I believe strongly that allowing boys in girls' sports and spaces is detrimental to girls.

During the 2024–2025 indoor track season, I encountered a situation I never expected: a boy competing in the girls' pole vault. Based on performance standards across high school, college, and even Olympic levels, male vaulters on average outperform comparable female vaulters by approximately four feet.

I didn't know how to handle it at first, so I took it one meet at a time. Very quickly, the impact on the girls became clear. I saw athletes I had known for years—now in their fourth season—visibly struggling. Confident, social young women sat alone, fighting back tears. Some searched for excuses not to compete. Being just feet away from them, witnessing their emotional distress firsthand, was something I cannot forget.

I also saw the frustration of parents who knew their daughters' years of hard work would not be fairly rewarded. I heard whispers from spectators saying, "This is wrong," but many were afraid to speak up for fear of being labeled or ostracized. I, too, hesitated, afraid of losing something I loved—coaching and mentoring young athletes.

But I had to ask myself: who am I if I stay silent?

Since 1972, Title IX has protected opportunities for girls in sports, and those opportunities have grown significantly. In recent years, however, those protections have come into question. Some girls are now choosing not to compete because they do not feel the competition is fair.

In Maine, the Maine Human Rights Act recognizes sex as a protected class. LD 2239 helps ensure that protections based on sex in sports are upheld, aligning with both Title IX and the MHRA.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Allen

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