

Testimony in Opposition of LD 2239: “An Act to Designate School Participation and Facilities by Sex”

Testimony of Libby Wright, Deputy Director, NAMI Maine | April 14, 2026

In Opposition of LD 2239 – “An Act to Designate School Participation and Facilities by Sex” | Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Libby Wright, and I am the Deputy Director at NAMI Maine, the state’s largest grassroots mental health organization. We provide awareness, support, education, and advocacy for individuals experiencing mental health challenges, as well as for the families who support them.

We also work directly with youth across Maine delivering mental health education, increasing help-seeking behaviors, strengthening youth-adult connections, and building resilience and protective factors in young people’s lives. In conversations with thousands of young people across the state, the number one thing they tell us they want to learn is how to support the mental health of their friends.

I am here today to testify in strong opposition to LD 2239.

While this bill is presented as a matter of fairness in athletics, the evidence clearly indicates that it is not solely a sports policy; rather, it has the potential to cause significant and lifelong negative mental health impacts.

Data from the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey show that LGBTQ+ youth in Maine already face significantly higher rates of harm in school environments. In 2025, 37% of LGBTQ+ students reported being bullied or harassed at school compared to 21% of their peers.¹

The mental health impacts are profound. LGBTQ+ youth in Maine are three times more likely to seriously consider suicide than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. In 2023, 36% reported seriously considering suicide and 17% reported attempting suicide.² More than half

¹ Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), 2025 Results.

² MIYHS, 2023 High School Report.



Maine

approximately 56%, reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless compared to 28% of their peers.³

Data from The Trevor Project indicate that LGBTQ+ youth who experience discrimination and victimization are at significantly increased risk of suicide attempts.⁴

These disparities are not because of who these young people are; they are the result of the environment around them. Research consistently shows that discrimination, victimization, and exclusion are key drivers of poor mental health outcomes.⁵

LD 2239 would codify that exclusion.

By restricting access to sports teams and facilities based on birth certificates, this bill sends a clear message to transgender and gender-diverse youth: you do not belong.

When that message is reinforced by law, it does more than exclude it legitimizes stigma.

We have seen the consequences of this before. Policy shapes school climate and affects entire school communities, reducing cohesion and increasing stigma.⁶

We also know what works. Inclusive and affirming environments are among the strongest protective factors for youth mental health. Access to supportive spaces, including extracurricular activities like sports, is associated with lower rates of depression and suicide risk.⁷

LD 2239 moves us in the opposite direction.

The State Health Improvement Plan calls for an inclusive and equitable culture of mental health for all Mainers.⁸

For these reasons, NAMI Maine respectfully urges this Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 2239.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

³ MIYHS, 2025 Results.

⁴ The Trevor Project, 2024 Maine State Report.

⁵ The Trevor Project, 2024 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health.

⁶ Maine Department of Education, School Climate Resources.

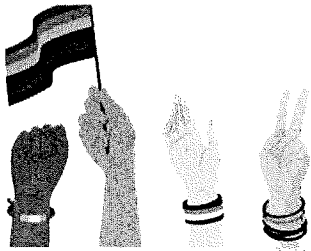
⁷ The Trevor Project, 2024 National Survey.

⁸ Maine CDC, State Health Improvement Plan 2024–2029.

Health Among LGBTQ+ High School Students in Maine

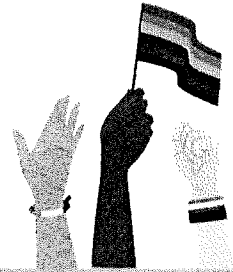
2025 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey Data

The 2025 MIYHS definition of LGBTQ+ includes students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and other non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities.



1 in 5 students identify as **LGBTQ+ (21%)**

that is approximately **11,241** Maine high school students



Lack of Support

LGBTQ+ students are less likely to have support from adults in their lives.

Twice as likely to have **4 or more** adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)*



Less likely to have support from adults other than their parents



Less likely to feel like they matter to their community



Violence & Discrimination

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience violence and discrimination at home and at school than non-LGBTQ+ students.

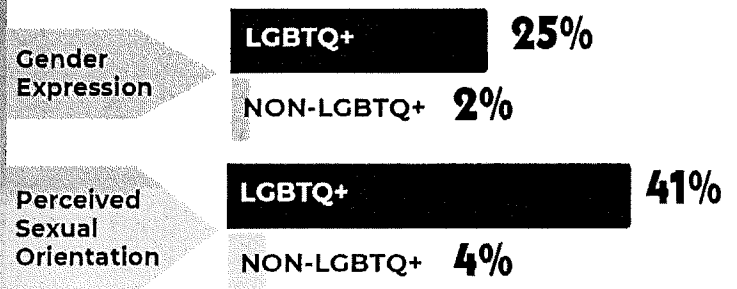
More than twice as likely to feel unsafe at school



More likely to be bullied at school



More likely to experience offensive comments or be attacked at school because of:

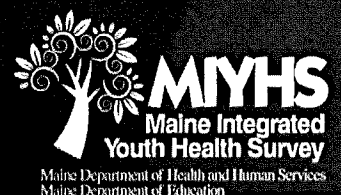


Transgender (trans): those who identify with a gender that is different than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Cisgender: those whose gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

Learn more about adverse childhood experiences: <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html>

www.maine.gov/miyhs
miyhs.dhhs@maine.gov



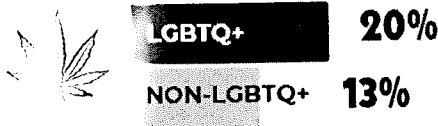
Substance Use

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience violence and discrimination, which can increase their risk of substance use.

Almost twice as likely to have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days



More likely to have used cannabis in the past 30 days



More likely to have used an electronic vapor product in the past 30 days



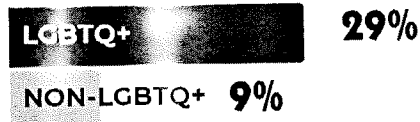
Mental Health

LGBTQ+ students face many challenges and have fewer supports. Their mental health outcomes are significantly worse.

More than twice as likely to feel sad or hopeless for 2 or more weeks in the past year



Three times as likely to have seriously considered suicide in the past year



SOS

If you know an LGBTQ+ young person who is struggling with thoughts of suicide, contact:

Call or Text 988

Visit: TheTrevorProject.org



866-678-7386



Text START to 678-678

How to Help

Support the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and other non-heterosexual, non-cisgender students.

- SUPPORT** a Gay/Straight/Trans Alliance (GSTA) in your school. Connections to supportive friends and caring adults can have a positive effect on students' mental health and well being.
- CREATE** a welcoming and affirming environment in your school, organization, or community by actively reaching out to LGBTQ+ youth and using inclusive language and programming.
- PROVIDE** LGBTQ+ youth opportunities to connect with each other and with supportive adults in your school or community.
- LEARN** how your school, organization, or community can better serve and support LGBTQ+ young people and their families.
- REQUEST** a free guide on GSTAs, inclusive youth programming, or LGBTQ+ friendly workplaces, here: outmaine.org/resources/

ABOUT THE MAINE INTEGRATED YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY (MIYHS)

The biennial collaboration between the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Department of Education since 2009. It aims to identify youth health issues through direct surveys taken by Maine students in all middle and high schools can participate.

www.maine.gov/miyhs
miyhs.dhhs@maine.gov

