

**TESTIMONY OF SARAH A. McDANIEL,
PFLAG PORTLAND MAINE CHAPTER
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 2239
Judiciary Committee, April 14, 2026 9:00 a.m.**

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for holding a hearing on this ballot initiative, which I urge you to oppose.

My name is Sarah A. McDaniel. I am a practicing attorney who resides in New Gloucester. Most importantly, I am mother of a transgender son and am on the Board of PFLAG's Portland Maine Chapter.

WHO IS PFLAG?

When my son first came out to me as transgender a decade ago, at age 14 the summer before he started high school, I turned to PFLAG for education and support on this unanticipated parenting journey.

If you are not familiar with PFLAG, they are the country's oldest ally group, begun in 1972 when a mother marched in the first New York pride parade in support of her gay son – a monumental show of love. **That grew a movement of parents, friends and family of LGBTQ+ people working to protect their loved ones from discrimination.** Fifty years later, PFLAG is now a national nonprofit with staffed offices in DC that works across the country by a series of local volunteer-run chapters, currently numbering in the hundreds.

PFLAG Portland is one of 2 active chapters in Maine, where it has been active for over 30 years, Since covid, our chapter's monthly support meetings have stayed on Zoom as we are better able to help families from all corners of the state.

I've been on the board for about 8 years, including a tenure as president for 4 years. In this time, we have been able to **serve on the order of 400 Maine families.** A large proportion of these are families seeking to better understand and support their transgender loved ones, often youth.

In addition to our monthly peer support groups, we have been invited by faith leaders to speak at their churches and help them becoming more welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. We join panels on LGBTQ+ issues when invited by school groups. And we are a voice for parents when policies that may harm their children are moving through the legislature, like today.

One point that I hope you understand as you listen to all the testimony today is that **parents of transgender youth are scared for the safety of their children.** This increasingly contentious political environment has targeted Maine children and put their safety in danger. The bravery and courage of the people who come out today to testify in person, or who share their stories with you in writing should be applauded. Yet for everyone who speaks up, there are many more parents,

teachers, friends, youth who also want this bill to fail, but are not able to share their identifying information to vocally oppose the bill out of fear of their families being targeted for violence.

PFLAG is here to speak for them.

MY FAMILY'S STORY

My son came out to us the summer before his freshman year in high school, this was back in 2015. We started with a social transition, calling him by a male name and using he/him pronouns for the first time. I reached out to the high school administrators who worked with us to use his name and pronouns on all the non-legal places, confirmed that he could use either the boys room or the gender neutral bathroom, and ensured there was privacy in the locker room space he could use for his gym class. **These small changes made a huge difference in his ability to navigate the school day without fear so that he could focus on his classes, and his friends, just like any other teenager.**

As parents, all we wanted for our son was the same high school experience as all kids: to be able to be himself, to focus on his studies and his friends without worrying for his safety and without being singled out and targeted in the process. I was grateful that his school followed the Maine Human Rights Commission guidance that had recently been put in place, and that the general atmosphere in America was more accepting than when I was growing up.

Fast-forward a decade to today, and the very small community of transgender or nonbinary people (less than 3% of the US population) have been pulled into the center of a culture war where they are targeted and vilified. **This ballot initiative will reverse decades of progress towards equal treatment, and will expose our youth to its message of discrimination.**

While the proponents of the bill before you this morning characterize it as an **anti-trans sports bill**, **it is important to recognize that it extends farther than that.** This overly-expansive bill not only prevents transgender children of all ages from playing sports in school, it requires all public schools to prevent trans kids from using the bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender; it purports to exempt this discrimination from the Maine Human Rights Act, and it puts schools at risk of civil lawsuits for alleged harm.

THE ANTI-TRANS SPORTS BILL NEEDLESSLY DISCRIMINATES AGAINST TRANS GIRLS

To justify discrimination, this bill is founded in the harmful presumption that *any boy* is inherently superior to *any girl* in *any sport*. That couldn't be farther from the truth.

Opponents highlight the few occasions where a trans woman athlete has won one particular race/match/game. But even these high-profile cases do not support their concerns as those same trans athletes also fail to win many other races/matches/games. Notably, their examples do not

have relevance to the context of younger kids playing sports, but **the bill before you today would impose the same standards on elementary school kids as on college kids, and is not sport-specific.**

Success in sports isn't dictated by "birth sex" or by gender. In addition to physical prowess which varies widely across individual humans, more critical elements of sports success include:

- access to resources (equipment, camps, special trainings);
- devotion to practice;
- quality of coaching;
- good sleep & nutrition;
- family and friends support & encouragement

– all combine to make each human a unique mix of talent and skills.

This bill tells all girls that that "boys" are inherently "better" at "sports" than "girls". That is not true, and that is a harmful message to send to all our girl athletes, and also to our boys.

All parents of athletes want their children to have a fair playing field, but this bill does not actually address the challenges that have continued to plague women's sports.

Addressing the lack of equal quality sports facilities for girl's teams, preventing sexual assaults by coaches, and working for equal compensation and media coverage will do much more to advance women's sports than any ban on transgender athletes.

TRANS ATHLETES ARE NOT A THREAT; POLICING GENDER IS THE THREAT.

One of most troubling aspects of this bill is how its enforcement will hurt all girls. This bill encourages vigilante attacks that can target and accuse *any girl* who doesn't conform to an outdated stereotype of feminine appearance. Your cisgender daughters who are 'too tall' or 'too strong' or choose to dress 'manly' can be targeted, subject to harassment and suspended from play until they 'prove' their worthiness if challenged by anyone who may want them off the team for any reason. This reinforces false notions of femininity not only against trans girls, but ANY girl suspected or alleged to be different. This harms all girls.

Importantly, **this bill applies even outside the sports context.** Elementary and middle school gym locker rooms, anyone attending a school play needing a bathroom break at intermission. I can tell you that you do NOT want my big, handsome heavily-bearded son walking into a girls bathroom. Yet that is where this bill would require him to go. Subjecting him to a genital inspection does not protect girls. Subjecting your tom-boy daughters to genital inspections, or requiring them to carry copies of their birth certificate at all times does not protect girls.

This bill suggests that focusing on birth certificates is a way around this issue. But that doesn't work. **Birth certificates are governed by state law in the state where a person is born, and the U.S. Constitution requires that full faith and credit be given to other state's vital records laws.** Some states (including Maine) allow an "X" gender marker at birth instead of M or F. Some states also have different rules governing how transgender or intersex people can update their birth certificate, and whether the "original" would be available after a gender correction. Maine allows such updates to the gender-marker on birth certificates, and after such a change the "original" is sealed. Original birth certificates are also sealed after an adoption, further complicating the issue. Focusing on the birth certificate is not a reliable way to enforce these discriminatory laws.

Not only would trans youth be burdened, but any girls who don't meet stereotypes of feminine appearance (think about your "tom-boy" daughters) might also be challenged to prove themselves. Forcing our public school kids to carry their birth certificates throughout the school day is a needless distraction. **The fact of the matter is, as so many PFLAG parents know, when trans kids use the school bathrooms or locker rooms, all they care about is just doing their business and getting out of there as quickly as possible, for their own safety.** They are not the threat.

Importantly, many families may want to wait before making a change to their child's gender marker on the birth certificate. But if that delay would prevent their child from playing sports, this bill could force families to expedite what should be a carefully considered decision.

TRANS YOUTH DESERVE TO PLAY WITHOUT STIGMA, AT ALL AGES

The simplistic cry of 'no men in women's sports' is a red herring. These bills address elementary through college age, so we are not talking about "men." We are talking about transgender girls. Kids. Public high school and elementary sports should not be held to exacting standards of elite athletics.

Youth sports is for leadership, teamwork, fitness, and fun. The benefits of fitness, leadership, team building, and sportsmanship that high school and elementary school sports provide should continue to be available to all Maine students, as our laws now allow.

Our trans youth would like nothing more than for their gender to be irrelevant. They want to spend their time, as all youth do, relaxing with their friends, playing sports, playing games, focusing on their school work.

As a mother, all I wanted for my son was the same high school experience as all kids: to be able to be himself, to focus on his studies and his friends without worrying for his safety and without being singled out and targeted in the process.

Quite simply, this bill will hurt Maine children, and do nothing to protect girls.

Trans youth are not a threat; policing gender is the threat. Maine has been a leader in recognizing the human dignity of all our transgender loved ones, we should continue to lead the way forward, not turn back the clocks. I request everyone on this Committee to oppose enactment of LD 2239; this bill OUGHT NOT TO PASS. I am pleased to answer any questions today.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah A. McDaniel, Board Member
PFLAG Portland Maine Chapter

**ORAL TESTIMONY OF SARAH A. McDANIEL (3 MINUTE VERSION)
PFLAG PORTLAND MAINE CHAPTER
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 2239
Judiciary Committee, April 14, 2026 9:00 a.m.**

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Sarah A. McDaniel, I live in New Gloucester and am mother of a transgender son. I'm here as a parent, and also as a Board Member of PFLAG's Portland Maine Chapter. Our chapter has been active in Maine for over 30 years supporting families and friends of those with LGBTQ+ loved ones. We currently have members from Presque Isle to York, and we reach about 400 Maine families from all points inbetween.

All of us at PFLAG are deeply concerned about LD 2239. This bill would essentially prevent transgender youth of all ages, including elementary age kids, from playing sports, **but it is more than just a sports bill, it is a bathroom bill.** If enacted, it would require public schools to force transgender students to use restrooms and locker rooms that don't match their gender.

My son came out to us the summer before his freshman year in high school, back in 2015. We started with a social transition and I reached out to the high school administrators who worked with us to use his male name and he/him pronouns, confirmed that he could use either the boys room or the gender neutral bathroom, and ensured there was privacy in the locker room space he could use for his gym class. **These small changes made a huge difference in his ability to navigate the school day without fear so that he could focus on his classes, and his friends, just like any other teenager.**

Fast-forward a decade to today, and transgender and nonbinary people have been pulled into the center of a culture war where they are targeted and vilified. **This ballot initiative will reverse decades of progress towards equal treatment, and will expose our youth to its message of discrimination.**

Using birth certificates for 'gatekeeping' the bathrooms doesn't work. **Not only would trans youth be burdened, but any girls who don't meet stereotypes of feminine appearance (think about your "tom-boy" daughters) might also be challenged to prove themselves.** Forcing our public school kids to carry their birth certificates throughout the school day is a needless distraction. The fact of the matter is, as so many PFLAG parents know, **when trans kids use the school bathrooms or locker rooms, all they care about is just doing their business and getting out of there as quickly as possible, for their own safety.** They are not the threat.

One last point as you consider all the testimony today is that **parents of transgender youth are scared for the safety of their children.** The courage of the youth and families who have shared their stories with you in person or in writing should be applauded. Yet for every 1 person who testified, there are many more people who also want this bill to fail, but are not able to publicly speak up out of fear of their transgender loved ones being targeted for violence.

As a mother, all I wanted for my son was the same high school experience as all kids: to be able to be himself, to focus on his studies and his friends without worrying for his safety and without being singled out and targeted in the process.

Quite simply, this bill will hurt Maine children, and do nothing to protect girls.

On behalf of PFLAG, I urge you to vote "no" on LD 2239.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Sarah A. McDaniel

Board Member, PFLAG Portland Maine Chapter