



Testimony of Kristen Kinchla, Maine Children's Alliance

In Opposition to LD 2239, An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Kristen Kinchla—I go by Kinch—and I am the Research Associate at the Maine Children's Alliance. I am testifying today on behalf of the Maine Children's Alliance in opposition to LD 2239, An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex.

I want to start by stating a simple fact I believe to be true: All youth in Maine deserve to live long, healthy lives and feel supported by and connected to their communities.

The Trevor Project, a nonprofit organization that focuses on suicide prevention in transgender youth, has found higher rates of suicide attempts in trans youth who report that their homes, schools, or communities are not accepting of their identity.

Statistics about the mental health of trans youth from the 2025 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey are startling. For transgender middle schoolers, more than half (60%) have seriously thought about killing themselves, more than one-third (37%) have tried to kill themselves, and more than two-thirds (69%) report self-harming behaviors. For transgender high schoolers, the statistics are similarly startling: almost half (43%) have seriously considered attempting suicide, more than one-fifth (23%) have attempted suicide at least 1 time, and more than half (57%) report self-harming behaviors.

Passage of this bill would send a dangerous message to trans youth that their communities do not accept them. Given that more than 1 in 5 high schoolers (21.2%) and more than 1 in 6 middle schoolers (17.1%) identified as LGBTQ+, that message will negatively impact youth mental health, safety, and well-being in our state.

The best way to protect these youth is to ensure they have access to gender-affirming spaces and communities. Research shows that transgender and nonbinary youth who had

access to gender-affirming spaces and communities, and had their pronouns respected by others, had lower rates of suicide compared to those who did not.

We know that participating in youth sports can lead to immediate and long-term benefits for all youth, their families, and communities. With specific regard to mental health, participating in sports is associated with lower rates of anxiety and depression and reduced risk of suicide. We should want more youth to play sports, not put up barriers to their participation.

Sports can be life-saving, especially when they are also gender-affirming.

As a student athlete who has competed alongside and against trans athletes, I can affirmatively state that this was a non-issue. My friends got to compete as they identified, and my competition got to do the same.

When we asked the youth of Maine what they thought about this issue last May, they showed up and told us. They will not be afforded the same opportunity to be heard should this bill become a ballot measure.

Policies like this one that promote discrimination and seek to roll back the civil rights of LGBTQ+ people threaten to make Maine another unsafe state for LGBTQ+ youth and their families.

I urge you, please, to vote against this bill for the sake of trans, non-binary, and LGBTQ+ youth in our state and in the nation.

All youth in Maine deserve to live long, healthy lives and feel supported by and connected to their communities. Make sure they know you are some of the adults who want that for them, too.

References

[The Trevor Project's 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

[Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey Results](#)

[Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Benefits of Youth Sports Report](#)