

Good morning Senator, Representatives and honorable members of the legislature. Thank you for your service and for giving me the opportunity to testify. My name is Susan Stark and I live in Falmouth, Maine. I have worked as an educator in Maine for 27 years and have been blessed with an amazing husband of 26 years and three wonderful children. I am here to speak in opposition to LD 2239.

I am a cisgender woman. My children are a trans teenage daughter and two cisgender young adult men. Since my daughter came out, I have come to understand much more about what it means to be transgender. You may already know that sex is not binary: approximately 1 in every 200 people is intersex from birth. Transgender and nonbinary people have existed all throughout history, in many cultures, ancient and modern: cultures dating back to 5000 BCE have described transgender members of their societies.

I strongly oppose LD 2239. The rights in question in this bill, the rights to be included in society as you are, are basic human rights. There are many reasons to oppose this bill, most centrally the harm and trauma to trans people that it would enact. But here I focus on the fact that it is beneficial for all of us if we reject the narrow conceptions of gender and the binary conception of sex that this bill would further entrench.

Bills such as LD 2239 are sometimes portrayed as protecting women and girls. But the harms and risks to women and girls are the harms of intimate partner violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking, and gun violence. According to the population reference bureau (<https://www.prb.org/news/today-young-women-in-the-united-states-are-more-likely-to-die-than-at-any-point-since-the-1960s/>), gun violence and homicide from intimate partner violence committed by men are among the leading causes of death for women 25-34 years old. As we have seen through the Epstein files, and high profile cases of sexual assault by male coaches and team doctors, it is men who commit these crimes.

Indeed, according to a 2022 article in the Portland Press Herald (<https://www.pressherald.com/2022/07/22/david-treadwell-kudos-to-maine-boys-to-men/>) 90% of violence in the United States is committed by boys and men. And according to the CDC, 80% of suicides are committed by men (<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/data.html>).

One aspect of all of these problems is a narrow conception of masculinity: a view that identifies being a man with being tough, being aggressive, and even being violent. One glimpse into this problem is provided by the recent Netflix series "Adolescence." Based on several real life cases, it is a heartbreaking portrayal of an awkward 13 year old boy who is bullied by a girl, finds comfort in a misogynistic online "manosphere," and ultimately kills the girl who bullied him.

This is a fictional story. But it demonstrates the real life consequences of a narrow conception of masculinity for boys and men. But we do not need to accept this rigid understanding of gender. A world in which we accept transgender, intersex, and nonbinary people as they are, with access to all the aspects of single-sex spaces aligned with their gender identity, is a world in which we can enable many understandings of femininity and masculinity. And while it is a complex matter to address the harms I detailed above, I believe that the first step is to accept people as they are, across all gender identities and sexes. Please vote **ought not to pass** on LD 2239.