

Gray Baldwin
Damariscotta
LD 233

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Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Maine Judiciary Committee, my name is Gray Baldwin. I live in Damariscotta, Maine. I am a therapist of over 30 years of experience as well as a researcher in culturally responsive practices.

I am here to testify against LD 233 - An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding Is Provided to the School which is sponsored by Representative Campbell.

When I found out about the hearings for this bill, I spoke with one of the teens I work with who is trans. I asked him if I could share his thoughts about this with the committee. Given rules around confidentiality, I cannot give his name or location. I can say that this individual plays on a high school team that is in alignment with his gender identity. He is completely accepted by his teammates and coach for who he is and has community support to play his sport. He is a valued member of the team and loves going to games and tournaments.

This young high school student said that there are two issues with this bill, from his point of view. First, this student spoke of the messages that are given to kids and teens that they need to get outdoors and play sports. He talked of the messages that adults give kids about how important it is to be active for physical and mental health as well as the life skills that kids and teens gain from playing sports, especially team sports. He expressed a feeling of confusion with this bill for it is trying to limit kids and teens access to sports, which they are encouraged to be a part of. He questioned why a small group of kids and teens is being given a message that is counter to that strong narrative for kids to be active to be healthy.

His second point was that the information being shared about a "250 lb man pretending to be a woman" is just not accurate. These are kids and teenagers that are being targeted by this law. The fearmongering about differences in strength and size as well as wanting to hurt to other teammates are just not accurate. These kids just want to play the sports they love, like so many other kids in Maine. They are not a threat to their teammates or others. They are simply people who love to play their sport.

As a therapist, I could quote research, but I think this youngster said it all so eloquently. It is not right to legislate away kids' rights to play sports. Maine is a state filled with people who are proud of its long history of defending democracy. To take away children's ability to play sports does not protect anyone but instead starts a harmful process of removing rights from those who do not fit into a tiny box of attributes that does not actually exist. Our diversity makes us stronger and better. I urge everyone to vote against this bill and protect all our children's freedom to play sports.

I respectfully urge you to not vote discrimination into our state's laws. Thank you for your time.