

Rob Benson
Bar harbor
LD 233

Reverend Rob Benson
Bar Harbor
May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.

My name is Reverend Rob Benson, from Bar Harbor, and I am here in opposition to this slate of bills that further marginalize members of the trans community by denying them the fundamental formative experiences of acceptance, teamwork, and community support.

I have been a swim coach for over 40 years, from summer camp through NCAA, at one time holding Level 3 professional certification. Bills like the ones before you today purport to protect girls in sports, while ignoring the dire and prevalent issue of physical, emotional, and sexual harassment and abuse in sports. Respectfully, let me suggest that you start by protecting women and girls from these pervasive abuses through ensuring robust prevention and reporting mechanisms at all levels of participation.

But since these bills propose to achieve their objective by scapegoating and marginalizing trans people, let me offer my perspective as a pastor in Maine communities for nearly 25 years. My Christian faith leads me to see all people - trans people included - as created in the image of God. These bills would subject trans people to an unconscionable level of scrutiny and exclusion, which would further marginalize them and make them vulnerable not just to increasingly vocal taunts and jeers, but even worse, to increasing acts of violence. Trans people - as all people - are made in the indelible image of God, and they deserve our protection and inclusion, not our judgment or ridicule, not further dehumanization or violence.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspectives with the Committee. I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on this slate of anti-trans bills before you today.
Thank you.

For your reference I've included a link to this 2023 publication from UNESCO / UN Women entitled: "Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport"

https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3343_unwomen_unesco_vawg_handbook_6a_singlepage.pdf