

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee. My name is Craig Cardamone and I am a resident of Winterport and I am writing to encourage you to vote in opposition to LD 223, 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.

As a licensed marriage and family therapist serving people all across the state and specifically working with people in the transgender community I know the inevitable mental health suffering this bill will cause if it were to pass. Due to being bound by confidentiality I cannot speak about the individual experiences of my clients, but I can provide my understanding of what they go through. In most of my sessions with my transgender clients, we speak about the discrimination, trauma, and distress they experience living in a culture that continuously targets their wellbeing and safety. They describe their experiences of living in today's political climate like "terrified", "paralyzed by fear", "completely shut down". This bill contributes to dangerous myths about trans people perpetuates the harmful political rhetoric currently being disseminated by the media and political leaders. Bills aiming to limit athletic participation for trans children add fire to flames already being stoked by people in power who want to legislate "traditional gender norms" and the destruction of our public schools. My clients already struggle with existing in bodies that society deems undesirable and "sick" and this bill invites further scrutiny, judgement, and harassment. Studies show that in states that enact any sort of trans "ban", whether that's related to athletics, bathrooms, or receive care, suicide rates skyrocket up to 72%. We also see verbal harassment and physical assault against trans people increase dramatically in states that pass similar bills. Is Maine willing to discard the wellbeing of children to satisfy the desires of what amounts to a moral panic?

On the issue of athletic "fairness", anyone who participates in sports understands there are a variety of factors that determine who will do well and who won't. As a swimmer for 15 years in my childhood, including high school, I experienced this first hand. My high school was known as one of the top swimming schools in the state of Texas, which itself is a state widely known to produce Olympic caliber swimmers. I trained hard and was fairly dedicated, but was never at the top. I can attribute this to many factors that have nothing to do with my gender. However, despite being male there were a number of female swimmers who were extremely talented and could easily beat me in any race. My point in offering my experience is to highlight what all athletes know; gender and sex are only a couple of the many factors that contribute to how well someone does in a sport. At no time were my female teammates questioned what their gender or sex were when they beat me in a race. No one wanted to know what their genitalia looked like or what their birth certificate said. What we did care about was the experience of being on a team together, celebrating our victories, socializing with each other, and being a part of something a little larger than just being a high schooler. Ultimately what bills like this do is send a message of which children are allowed to experience this and which aren't. It also signals to the broader community that there is something so inherently wrong about trans children that we need specific legislation to decide which sports team they should be on. This bill purports to care about "fairness", but there's nothing fair about deciding from on high how to appropriately be a gendered person. It further marginalizes and tells trans children we don't care what you

want. This bill invites more scrutiny on all women's bodies and creates the potential for invasion surveillance in the future to determine who is "really" female. We see the beginnings of this within our culture, as "tall" or "muscular" female athletes are immediately accused of secretly being a man. As a state, we need to vehemently counter this trend and stand with not only trans women, but with everyone.

In the end, we have to ask ourselves, what sort of society do we want to raise our children in? Do we want to show them that they can be accepted for who they are, engage in the activities they want to engage in, and live as normal children? Or do we want to teach children there are right and wrong ways to exist in a body and that they cannot trust themselves to know who they are? I hope that members of the judiciary committee choose the former and vote ought not to pass for LD 233. Thank you.