

Benjamin Cates
Portland
LD 868

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Benjamin Cates and I am a resident of Portland. I am here today in opposition of the bills before the committee today.

As a child attending Portland Public Schools, I was incredibly un-athletic, compared to my peers of any gender. Transitioning during school and subsequently competing on sports teams that aligned with my gender would not have made me instantaneously and miraculously more athletic than my cisgender peers. In fact, athletic success is far more dependent on perseverance, dedication, and teamwork than it is on someone's assigned gender at birth.

While participating in the track team (and while attending required PE classes) during my freshman year of high school, I was bullied, sexually harassed, and groped by my cisgender male peers for, among other things, being perceived as both too feminine and not athletic enough. Similarly, one of my female friends on the school's swim team was bullied for being too masculine, largely because she was a strong competitor and periodically out-swam male peers who put in far less effort. Rather than encouraging bullying, increasing the risk of youth suicide, and institutionalizing the policing of gender norms, the legislature should be spending its time and energy on encouraging more young people to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you!