

Testimony of Sarah Cushman, Resident of Portland – May 8, 2025

Against: LD 1337: An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with the Committee.

My name is Sarah Cushman, I am a resident of Portland, and I'm a Christian mom and member of Portland Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

I oppose LD 1337 and I am submitting testimony in opposition of all the bills before the committee today.

As someone born and raised in Maine, **our state has to stand up against the national political agenda that is interfering with our rights to make our own laws.** We are an independent and free-thinking state. Passing this would reward the federal government's bullying tactics and open the door for further attacks on Mainers' civil rights, but **it won't make Maine more safe or fair for anyone.** You cannot let this happen on your watch.

And as a Christian woman and as a mom of teen daughters, I know that **this bill would leave ALL of Maine girls vulnerable - including yours and mine - to scrutiny, invasions of privacy, harassment, and potential violence.**

How would you feel if your daughter or niece or granddaughter was put through an invasive and likely traumatizing "gender check" in order to play sports, if any person called for it, because they thought she was "too tall" or "too strong", etc.? I am horrified by the fact that these bans would invite any person to be able to request this.

If you are a woman or you are close to any women, you already know how girls experience bullying and harassment. Bans like these embolden spectators, community members, and fellow competitors to bully and harass girls by accusing them of being transgender. If these bills pass, they will become another weapon for bullies to use against girls in Maine.

If you are a woman or you are close to any women, you know how much girls and women's bodies are already scrutinized. These bans add to this by having schools police gender norms, thereby unfairly scrutinizing girls' bodies even further. And even worse, this has been shown to affect girls of color even more - and as a white woman, I have seen and overheard this additional scrutiny of black and brown girls' bodies.

Any attempt to enforce this ban blatantly violates the privacy of all of us in Maine who are women and girls.

This is that much more for trans women in Maine, who already face serious barriers to accessing appropriate shelter – not to mention disproportionate risks of violence – when they are unhoused. **Shelters know how to keep all women safe and have been doing it for years.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee, **and for doing what's best for *all* our girls and women, and all the people of Maine** this legislative session.

I urge you to vote “Ought not to Pass” on LD 1337 and every bill before the committee today.

Sincerely,

Sarah Cushman