

Charles Ellis
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LD 1432

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1432, sponsored by Rep. Michael Soboleski, which proposes to remove “gender identity” as a protected class from the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA). I believe this bill is essential to restore fairness in girls’ sports and academics, ensure safety and comfort in sex-segregated spaces, and align Maine’s laws with federal Title IX requirements.

The inclusion of gender identity in the MHRA, added in 2005 and strengthened in 2021, has created conflicts with Title IX, which was designed to ensure equal opportunities for women and girls in education and athletics. Allowing biological males to compete in girls’ sports, based on gender identity, undermines this purpose. Physiological differences, such as muscle mass and testosterone levels, often give biological males competitive advantages, displacing female athletes from scholarships, awards, and opportunities. This creates an unfair environment in both athletics and academic settings, where athletic achievements are critical. LD 1432 would resolve this conflict by removing gender identity protections, enabling Maine to comply with Title IX and preserve equitable opportunities for female students.

Equally critical is the need to protect the safety and privacy of girls and women in sex-segregated spaces like bathrooms, shower rooms, and changing rooms. These intimate settings require policies that prioritize security and comfort. Allowing biological males to access these spaces based on gender identity can place female students in uncomfortable and potentially unsafe situations, compromising their dignity and well-being. By removing gender identity from the MHRA, LD 1432 would ensure that these facilities remain designated by biological sex, fostering a safe and respectful environment.

Maine Democrats have cited the MHRA’s gender identity protections as a barrier to complying with federal Title IX mandates, risking the loss of federal funding for our schools. LD 1432 addresses this directly by eliminating the conflicting language, protecting Maine’s educational institutions from financial penalties while upholding the rights of female students. The bill maintains protections against discrimination based on immutable traits like sex, ensuring fairness without undermining federal compliance.

I recognize the sensitivity of this issue and believe all individuals deserve respect. However, prioritizing fairness, safety, and compliance with federal law is crucial for our students. LD 1432 achieves this balance by amending the MHRA to focus on biological sex, aligning with President Trump’s executive order on protecting girls’ sports and recent federal scrutiny of Maine’s policies.

I urge the committee to support LD 1432 and advance it for passage. Thank you for your dedication to serving the people of Maine and for considering my testimony.