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Hello Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and member of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Nicole Fogg and I live in South Portland. Today I am testifying in opposition to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, LD 1704, LD 1337, LD 1432 and LD 380.

As a youth coordinator, I know these bills would undoubtedly hurt Maine schools and communities. Every child should have access to the same opportunities as their peers without the threat of being subjected to invasive interrogation or risking public ridicule. Bills that discriminate against transgender students violate both state and federal constitutional guarantees of equal protection. Having worked with youth in various settings, the most success I see with students is derived from offering a safe space to be themselves. To feel seen, heard and supported.

Sports teams aim to promote unity, teamwork and perseverance as well as the chance for athletes to build trust and confidence with not only their peers, but also with themselves. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination and does not require a prohibition on transgender or intersex athletes. Using trans athletes as a weapon to further an agenda that aims to roll back civil rights of marginalized communities is harmful to *everyone*, not just those targeted by these bills. If passed, they would open the floor for even more discrimination and harassment, emboldening individuals to accuse young students of being trans and leaving youth subject to scrutiny in spaces that should be uplifting and free from hostile and invasive practices.

I've seen first hand how incredibly empowering it is to validate a student's identity. When children feel seen, they thrive. LD 1002 would also take away the freedom youth have to express themselves in a secure and nurturing environment, one in which they may not be receiving elsewhere. It should not be understated that youth find solace in these safe spaces; something that we can (and should be) enthusiastically providing to each and every student.

To remove consideration of gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act (LD 1432) would reward the federal government's bullying tactics and open the door for further attacks on Mainers' civil rights. Amending any laws regarding gender-affirming health care services would also be detrimental to the health and safety of our youth. Maine state law has allowed doctors and patients to safely give and receive the care they need; LD 380 would especially cause great harm to health care providers. LGBTQ+ youth are placed at a higher suicide risk due to mistreatment in society. Access to gender-affirming care has been linked to lower odds of depression and suicidality; removing access to life-saving support is unnecessary, harmful and helps no one.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and share my perspective. I urge this committee to vote "Ought not to Pass" and reject all of these bills.