

Schyler Folsom  
Portland, Maine  
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important issue with the Committee. My name is Schyler Folsom. I am a Second Grade Elementary School Teacher and High School Girls Soccer Assistant Coach in my community. I am writing to express my clear and undisputed opposition to the bills before the committee today.

In my time as a soccer coach at the high school level, I have coached many different types of kids. Kids looking for social connection, kids looking to grow their soccer skills, kids looking to showcase their soccer skills for colleges, and kids looking to learn a new skill. The one thing that all of these kids get without always knowing that they wanted it, is a team. They gain a group of people that has their back on and off the field and new friendships and community that may not have formed without the ability to join a sports team. These bills would take that opportunity from vulnerable kids. Kids. Because that is who these bills are targeting.

LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience offensive comments or be attacked at school because of perceived sexual orientation with LGBTQ+ students at 34% and non-LGBTQ+ at 4%. LGBTQ+ students are less likely to have support from adults in their lives. Only 36% of LGBTQ+ students felt they mattered to their community, compared to non-LGBTQ+ students at 57%. (Source: Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey 2021) If these bills pass, they would have a direct and immediate impact on these statistics. You would be taking away access to safe, supportive coaches and community adults away from LGBTQ+ students and removing a safe outlet for them to build a community to support them when offensive comments come their way.

I have a gift currently to work with students, no matter their biological gender at birth. And the students that I work with have the gift of growing and learning from one another. I have coached teams with Trans athletes and I have coached teams without Trans athletes, and every time is the same. A group of kids who love soccer and have a desire to work as a team. All students have a right to join a team and form a community that feels safe and right to them. And in my experience, I have never once had another player feel uncomfortable because of our team's choice to include everyone. Every single student, despite their gender, is a gift to the team and adds something special to

the community and team dynamic. If these bills pass, you take that gift away from athletes in Maine and away from the coaches that get to teach them.

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.