

[LD 1134](#) *An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities* - Sen. Sue Bernard of Aroostook

Testimony to Maine Legislature Judiciary Committee
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to express my strong opposition to LD 1134, *An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities*.

I am a Mainer, a human rights professional, and the family member and friend of a number of trans individuals, who I love and respect dearly. This bill deliberately and cruelly targets the most basic humanity, worth, and dignity of trans individuals and, what's worse, takes aim at children.

This bill is not about protecting fairness or safety—it is about targeting a small, vulnerable group of young people in Maine for political gain. By seeking to ban transgender girls from school sports and bar them from using facilities aligned with their gender identity, LD 1134 singles out transgender students for exclusion and public scrutiny. When we legislate against a handful of young people who are already navigating a hostile and often misunderstood world, we are not crafting policy—we are engaging in state-sanctioned bullying.

There are reportedly only two publicly known transgender girls currently participating in school athletics in Maine. Yet this legislation would upend statewide policy and put all schools at risk of violating civil rights law just to exclude these few students. That is not governance; that is a political ploy that comes at the direct expense of children's mental health and basic dignity.

Research consistently shows that transgender youth in sports benefit significantly from participation. According to a 2022 study published by the *American Journal of Public Health*, transgender athletes who participate in school sports report higher levels of mental well-being, lower rates of depression, and improved social integration. Participation in sports not only improves physical health but also boosts self-esteem and provides a sense of community and belonging.

A 2021 study from the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* found that transgender girls who are allowed to compete in sports that align with their gender identity experience significantly improved mental health outcomes compared to their peers who are excluded. These benefits are especially important for transgender youth, who face disproportionately high rates of mental health challenges. According to research conducted by The Trevor Project in 2024, anti-transgender laws cause up to a 72% increase in suicide attempts among transgender and nonbinary youth. Transgender youth who are able to express their gender identity in supportive spaces, including sports, report significantly lower rates of depression and suicidality.

The 2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey also reported that 60% of transgender students avoid gym class due to feelings of discomfort and discrimination, a trend that worsens when students are barred from participating in activities consistent with their gender identity. Excluding transgender girls from school sports and facilities would further isolate them and drive up absenteeism and disengagement.

This bill also flies in the face of established legal precedent. In *Doe v. Regional School Unit 26* (2014), the Maine Supreme Judicial Court affirmed a transgender student's right to use the bathroom consistent with her gender identity under the Maine Human Rights Act. LD 1134 would directly contradict this ruling and expose Maine schools to legal liability and public backlash.

Instead of ensuring equity or safety, LD 1134 encourages stigma, division, and harm. It sends a chilling message to transgender youth across the state: that their identity is up for public debate, and that their basic human rights can be stripped away through political theater. Maine should be a place where all students are treated with respect and protected from discrimination—not where our laws are weaponized against those with the least power.

Thank you for your service and consideration of this issue. I respectfully urge the Committee in the strongest terms to vote “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 1134. Protecting children means all children—including transgender children.