

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the judiciary committee, thank you for the opportunity to add my testimony to the mountain of words you have listened to today. I appreciate your time and attention.

My name is Jed James. I am a 57-year-old transgender man, and I live down in Bath. I also am a psychotherapist working primarily with transgender adults.

From my earliest memories, I knew that I was a boy. Despite my parents' best attempts to convince me otherwise, I was quite certain that I was male, and the world often perceived me as such. When I was as young as 3, people began harassing my mother and me about my presence in women's bathrooms and women's changing rooms, insisting that I was a boy, and did not belong there. None of this got easier as I grew older. In high school, I was once harassed by students in an opposing basketball team's locker room for being "a boy," despite my just having competed against them in a girl's game. These girls well understood that I was not a boy; they teased me because they believed, based on my appearance, that I was gay.

Bills seeking to ban trans girls from girls' sports and girls' spaces are deeply problematic. Due to time constraints, I will leave it to others to enumerate upon the misguidedness and cruelty of excluding and isolating the tiny fraction of Maine's young athletes and students who are trans feminine.

I would like to speak to the fact that these laws will also impact girls who, like me, were assigned female at birth, but get singled out as too masculine, not feminine enough, not pretty enough, or simply too weird. These laws will promote school cultures of suspicion, gossip and exclusion instead of creating spaces where

differences of identity and opinion are talked through and respected.

It was miserable to be teased in a locker room in back in the 1980's. Now here we are, 40 years down the road, looking to codify such bullying into law. The fact is that any girl, any coach, could accuse a girl on an opposing team of being "biologically male." Similarly, any child, any school visitor, could call into question the gender of any girl using a girls' locker room or bathroom. Having experienced a childhood full of embarrassing scrutiny about my gender, I can only imagine the further humiliation that enacting these laws would invite.

I understand that the purpose of these proposed laws is to keep schools safer for girls. In fact, I believe that they would do the opposite, because I believe that when we teach children that it is okay to interrogate and ostracize some children for their differences, we teach them to devalue their own uniqueness, as well. That kind of repression hurts us all and does not lend itself to sportsmanship or safety.

Thank you.

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You will find copies of an earlier draft that I delivered with my live testimony as that was the physical copies I had made. Due to time limitations, I revised the testimony significantly. This uploaded document represents the final version that I presented live. Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony.