

## Testimony Opposing LD 868

Good morning, Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn. My name is Jess Knox, and I submit this today as a lifelong Mainer, a straight white man, a father, and a neighbor who cares deeply about the kind of communities we are building for all our children.

I am writing **in strong opposition to LD 868**, which seeks to bar transgender girls from participating on girls' sports teams and restrict access to school restrooms, locker rooms, and housing based on sex assigned at birth.

## Why This Matters to Me

You might ask: why would someone like me — a straight white man, whose own kids are not transgender — feel so strongly about this? Because I know what fairness really means. I know that fairness isn't about shutting doors on kids who are already marginalized. Fairness is about making sure **everyone** gets a chance to belong. Because I know what leadership means. Leadership means standing up not only for yourself, but for those who are being targeted — especially when you, personally, are not the target. And because I know what parenting means. Parenting means teaching our children to treat others with dignity, compassion, and respect — not to fear or exclude kids simply because they are different.

## LD 868 Is a Solution in Search of a Problem

Let's be honest: there is **no epidemic** of transgender girls taking over Maine's sports teams. There is no wave of incidents in our restrooms and locker rooms. This bill is **not** responding to real, documented problems. This is part of an intentional, cruel, national-wide effort to divide communities — a political effort to stoke fear and division by turning transgender children into political pawns.

As a father, as a man, and as a citizen, this effort makes me angry and upset.

## It's Not About Protecting Girls — It's About Excluding Trans Kids

I care about fairness in girls' sports. I'm deeply invested personally and financially in the growth of sports and activities for girls. And not just for my two daughters. And of course, I care about safety in schools. But banning a tiny number of transgender girls does not make sports more fair, and it does not make schools safer.

What it does is tell trans kids: *you don't belong here*.

What it does is tell all kids: *we decide who counts and who doesn't*.

That is not fairness. That's acting like a bully. That's not equality. That is discrimination, plain and simple.

## **We Have a Responsibility to Lead With Courage, Not Fear**

I know that some people feel confused or uncomfortable about gender identity. That's okay — we don't all have to fully understand it to treat people with respect. As a straight white man, I recognize that this fact comes with many advantages. That means I have a responsibility to stand up and say: targeting vulnerable kids is **never** the right answer. It is never the courageous thing to do.

We cannot build a stronger Maine by excluding people. We cannot teach fairness by legislating inequality — this country has done that time and again in the past, and it's only led to heartbreak, distrust, and disaster.

My question to each of you is this: What side of history will you end up on? I urge you to reject LD 868. Reject this attempt to write discrimination into Maine law. Let's model for our children what true fairness, dignity, and inclusion look like. Let's make sure that in Maine, **every child belongs**.

Thank you for your consideration.