

Amelia McDonald-Johnson
Bucksport
LD 380

Members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Amelia McDonald-Johnson, I'm a resident of Bucksport Maine and I am here in support of my friends and my fellow constituents.

This statement addresses the following bills presented in today's morning session—LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704—as well as LD 1337, LD 1432, and LD 380 from the afternoon block.

Seeing the proposed legislation limiting opportunities for equality in Maine schools is a troubling course of action. By targeting transgender and non-binary students these bills risk establishing harmful precedents that could ultimately exclude any student who does not conform to someone else's idea of what a girl or boy "should" look or act like.

Maine has a tradition of co-ed sports already including hockey, wrestling, football and more offered in part initially to ensure girls had the opportunity to participate in athletic programs. School sports are not just about competition or winning. They offer students a space to learn teamwork, resilience, and shared purpose. These are experiences that help children grow, not just as athletes, but as people. Those who rely on sports for scouting or college are also scored on an individual basis through their own merit, and being a good team player never hurts.

Focusing on gender misses the point of what school activities are supposed to foster: inclusion, collaboration, learning, and mutual respect. If these bills are passed, they will encourage a culture of suspicion around student athletes: Was someone "too masculine"? Too tall? Too strong to be a girl? This opens the door to invasive and inappropriate scrutiny, violating all students' privacy and reinforcing rigid, archaic gender norms. Even more concerning is the threat of withholding funding from schools that support inclusion. In a time when public education needs more resources and support, using funding as a weapon against affirming environments is appalling.

By allowing children to express their identity, we give them the space to feel safe and present in school. It's already a challenge to keep students engaged in learning; that challenge doubles when students feel unseen or unwelcome. LD 380 disregards the complexities young people face at this age. There is a thoughtful process in place—one that includes therapy and follow-up care with professionals. Most youth are not seeking gender-affirming care unless they are certain they need it to survive. I would rather have thriving trans kids than lose any to a system that denies them care and dignity.

Finally, seeing bills like LD 1337 and LD 1432, bills that add barriers for an already vulnerable population and seek to remove vital protections—reveals a disturbing lack of foresight and compassion. These protections exist for a reason. They save lives.

We should not be passing legislation that further marginalizes already at-risk people. Instead, we should be supporting policies that affirm the dignity and humanity of every person in Maine.

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!