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Testimony in Opposition to the Following:

- **LD 233: An Act to Prohibit Biological Males from Participating in School Athletic Programs and Activities Designated for Females When State Funding Is Provided to the School**
- **LD 868: An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools**
- **LD 1002: An Act to Protect Children's Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender Specified on a Child's Birth Certificate**
- **LD 1134: An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities**
- **LD 1704: An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Chris McLaughlin, and I am a licensed clinical social worker, behavioral health consultant, and educator with over 25 years of experience working with youth, families, and communities across the state of Maine. I submit this testimony in **firm opposition** to LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704—bills that would each, in different ways, erase, isolate, and endanger transgender and nonbinary students in Maine's public schools.

Taken together, these bills seek to:

- Ban transgender girls from participating in school sports (LD 233, LD 868, LD 1134),
- Deny students access to bathrooms and locker rooms aligned with their gender identity (LD 868, LD 1134, LD 1704),
- And strip students of their identity in educational environments unless their families provide legal documentation (LD 1002).

Let us be clear: these bills do **not** promote safety, fairness, or inclusion. They **weaponize fear** and misinformation against some of our most vulnerable youth—transgender and nonbinary students—under the guise of protecting others.

As a clinician and educator, I have supported countless LGBTQ+ youth and families navigating the trauma of discrimination and exclusion in school settings. I have seen the impact of being told, implicitly or explicitly, that who they are is wrong, unwelcome, or dangerous.

Each of these bills would:

- **Force young people to deny their authentic identities** or jump through invasive legal and bureaucratic hoops just to be acknowledged by their schools (LD 1002).
- **Ban them from the sports, locker rooms, restrooms, and peer communities** where they find connection, joy, and belonging (LD 233, LD 868, LD 1134, LD 1704).
- **Expose them to stigma, bullying, isolation, and increased risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide**—all of which are preventable when we create inclusive school environments.

The data is unequivocal. Access to gender-affirming environments **saves lives**. Denial of identity-based affirmation **puts lives at risk**.

These bills not only violate the basic principles of educational equity, but many likely run afoul of existing protections under:

- The **Maine Human Rights Act**, which explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender identity;
- **Federal Title IX**, which has been interpreted by courts to protect LGBTQ+ students;
- And the **ethical codes of every major medical and mental health association**, which support the rights of transgender individuals to live and be recognized according to their gender identity.


Legislating the denial of a student's identity, especially in spaces that are publicly funded, is not only unethical; it's legally precarious.

Maine has long prided itself on being a state that values community, fairness, and integrity. That legacy is at risk. These bills offer no solutions to real educational challenges. They create only fear, division, and harm. Rather than continuing to divide and distract Mainers with this tired and blatantly anti-trans agenda, **I would encourage any lawmaker in Augusta who truly is seeking ways to protect girls in our great state to instead focus their efforts on real legal actions that truly will protect all girls** including strengthening protections against gender-based harassment, ensuring equal access to educational activities and funding for extracurricular activities, addressing "period poverty" across Maine, funding essential behavioral health supports and expanding access to crisis and suicide prevention services, addressing youth tobacco and nicotine addiction, holding social media companies accountable for harm being done to girls on their platforms, and expanding resources for sexual assault and dating violence survivors.

Our trans and nonbinary students are watching this process closely. So are their peers, their parents, their teachers, and their future selves. We must ask ourselves: **What message are we sending when we single out a group of students and legislate their exclusion?**

I urge this committee to **reject LD 233, LD 868, LD 1002, LD 1134, and LD 1704**. Let us instead move forward with policies that honor every student's humanity and protect every child's right to learn, grow, and thrive in dignity.

Sincerely,



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