

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY KIM RUSSELL

**Maine Joint Committee on Judiciary
LD 868, An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms,
Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and
Postsecondary Schools**

May 8, 2025

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

I am Coach Kim Russell, Ambassador at Independent Women and advocate for women and girls. I am writing to you today to urge you to support LD 868. Women's sports have been my life and my passion. In college, I played two sports at the DI level, and I have been a women's lacrosse coach for 29 years. I have been inducted into three halls of fame for my contributions to the game of lacrosse and was appointed to the Women in Sports Commission for World Lacrosse (the governing body for the sport of lacrosse worldwide) in 2024.

Many of my players affectionately refer to me as the "Hippie Love Coach," not only because I'm a yoga instructor, am often barefoot, read energy, and coach intuitively, but because I've given countless individuals a safe space to thrive and feel a sense of belonging.

I've coached running down the sideline while nursing one child, with another in a backpack, while a third runs with me. I am a woman, through and through.

When I accepted the job as Head Women's Lacrosse Coach & Wellness Instructor at Oberlin in August of 2018, I was so excited to be a part of an institution known for its academic rigor, open-minded dialogue, and freedom to express oneself. And then, I learned the truth. Oberlin—like many institutions of higher-ed these days—only supports free speech when your values align with theirs.

Without protections, opportunities to compete are taken away from women—to say nothing of trophies and awards. If allowed, this will endanger

women in sports and private spaces and take away opportunities from women in sports and academia.

If passed into law, LD 868, which matches the President's executive order to define 'sex,' would protect women's hard earned rights—including our right to privacy and our right to not be subjects of sex-discrimination. By defining common sex-based words—words like 'woman' and 'female' already used in Maine statutes—this bill will safeguard female private spaces from attack by those who seek to manipulate the definition of words to achieve policies that lack political support. It will prevent men who say they identify as women from gaining an unfettered right to women's spaces.

If we can't define sex, Maine will have no way to fight sex discrimination. By allowing males into women's private spaces, women are being groomed to be sexually assaulted—or worse—sexually trafficked. They are being told to “be quiet” when there is a male in the women's bathroom or locker room—when their gut instinct tells them it's unsafe.

You, Committee members, have the opportunity to be heroes for women's rights and uphold biological truth. This is a widely supported issue and one that has received bi-partisan support at the state and federal level.

Please vote yes for LD 868 for the sake of the nearly 700,000 women and girls in Maine.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kim Russell
Ambassador
Independent Women