

RE: 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

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Julie Schirmer LCSW, ACSW, a proud resident of Falmouth Maine and testifying in my role as the President of the Board at NASW Maine. I am writing to express NASW Maine's and my strong opposition to LD 233, which targets transgender girls by preventing their participation in school sports or "any activity designated for females." This legislation undermines the mental health, civil rights, and dignity of an already marginalized group of young people.

Transgender girls face higher rates of discrimination, bullying, isolation, and mental health challenges. Denying them the ability to participate fully in school life, especially access to sports, restrooms, and locker rooms aligned with their gender identity, further marginalizes them and increases their risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidality. These disparities are not due to who they are, but the chronic stress caused by discrimination, stigma, and exclusion.

Participation in school sports and access to affirming spaces are linked to improved mental health, academic performance, self-esteem, and overall well-being. Leading medical and mental health organizations, including the American Psychiatric Association, support inclusive policies to protect youth mental health.

While concerns about fairness and safety are often raised, research does not support the assumption that transgender girls retain athletic advantages after gender-affirming treatment. Hormone therapy results in significant changes to muscle mass, strength, and endurance, often aligning their performance with that of cisgender women. Likewise, inclusive access to facilities has not been shown to pose safety risks, exclusion does.

This bill imposes a blanket ban that ignores scientific, medical, and lived realities. It singles out transgender girls for exclusion rather than fostering supportive environments for all students. It also puts all girls at risk by empowering schools to police narrow gender norms, inviting unfair scrutiny of girls' bodies, particularly those of girls of color, who are disproportionately impacted. These bans foster fear, confusion, and mistrust among students, families, and educators, reinforcing rigid gender expectations that harm all young people.

LD 233 also contradicts Maine's legal protections, including the Maine Human Rights Act and Title IX, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Passing this bill would violate those protections and expose our schools and state to legal challenges.

And let's be clear, this pertains to the two transgender athletes in Maine's public schools. (BBC, 2025 and Newsweek, 2023).

NASW urges you to oppose LD 233.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Schirmer LCSW, ACSW
President of the Board at NASW Maine

References:

Faguy, A. (2025) US government sues Maine over refusing to ban transgender athletes. BBC News, Washington, DC. April 16, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy48r02zrpvo>

Skinner, A. (2023) How many transgender athletes play in women's sports? Newsweek. April 21, 2023. <https://www.newsweek.com/how-many-transgender-athletes-play-womens-sports-1796006>

