

Maddie Thomson
Palermo
LD 233

I urge you to oppose LD 233. Young people should have the opportunity to play sports without limitation on the basis of sex assigned at birth.

As a girl in public schools in the 1990s and early 2000s, I was a beneficiary of Title IX: I took it for granted that my schools would have girls' and boys' teams, with equal facilities and resources allocated, for every sport. The message I received, and the practical outcome, was that I was valued and my participation was welcomed.

Athletics helped form my character and were a source of joy for me as a young person. I learned to work with a team of people who were different from me; I gained resilience, physical confidence, and lifelong healthy habits. Sometimes my competitor had an advantage: maybe they were taller and stronger than me; maybe they could afford private training; maybe they were willing to practice more than me. Sometimes that advantage meant they won, but it didn't mean that one of us didn't get to play. I learned to be gracious when I won, and to get up and try again when I lost. What I remember is not the games and races that I won, but the personal and interpersonal lessons that have stayed with me for life.

Sports for kids are about inclusion, participation, and giving young people the opportunity to build the skills they will need as adults. The outcome of this bill, if it passes, will be to keep transgender and gender non-conforming young people out of athletics entirely. We should not deprive transgender kids of these experiences, nor should we deprive cisgender kids of the opportunity to participate on teams with their transgender peers. Rejecting this bill is an opportunity to communicate to all children that they are valued and welcomed on their school's athletic teams. I urge you to vote "ought not to pass."