

Erin Belfort
Cape Elizabeth
LD 2239

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

I am a Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychiatrist practicing in Portland, Maine. For over a decade, much of my clinical work involved supporting the mental health of gender-diverse youth from across our state within a gender clinic program. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed ballot measure, LD 2239.

The thoughtful, evidence-based, and multidisciplinary care currently available to Maine's youth is life-saving; I have witnessed its positive impact firsthand many times. Decisions regarding gender-affirming care should remain between patients, their families, and their physicians.

For transgender youth lacking support from their families and communities, the harms to their mental health are well-documented. These include increased risks of bullying, harassment, abuse, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. It truly "takes a village" to raise a child, and that village—comprising parents, families, peers, school personnel, and coaches—must provide transgender children with the same care, respect, and inclusion that every child deserves.

Furthermore, the benefits of participating in youth sports—such as building self-esteem, teamwork, and physical health—are clear. Allowing all youth, including those who are transgender, to participate in sports and use facilities that align with their gender identity is the right thing to do. No child in Maine should be subjected to invasive and inappropriate gender verification tests, such as blood tests or physical examinations.

This bill represents an extreme blanket ban that would harm transgender children in Maine. While Mainers may hold differing viewpoints, I hope we can agree that all our children deserve care, respect, and inclusion within our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee.

Sincerely,

Erin Belfort, MD