

Genine Boggiano
Sanford, ME
LD 2239

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

Good afternoon, my name is Genine Boggiano, and I reside in Sanford, ME.

I am opposed to the proposed ballot measure, LD 2239.

It has become difficult to not be aware of the glaring anti-trans campaign that has taken root here in Maine. From YouTube ads to local school boards up in arms over bathrooms, to people protesting "save the girls sports" on the street. This, frankly, does not fit with the all inclusive nature of our state, our motto is "welcome home", is it not? We surely can do a lot better than allowing out of state influence take up residence and cause derision in our towns and cities.

I'd like to make a few points as to why I believe this ballot measure has no place in our state, especially in our schools -

1) Bullying. We've all experienced it. We all know how awkward high school can feel. Now sprinkle in some hateful, transphobic rhetoric on top. This does nothing to support trans youth, many of which are trying to figure themselves out and already are in a tough spot because of how prevalent bullying both online and in person has become due to the rise of measures such as this one. Are we really okay with the possibility of losing innocent kids to suicide if they feel like they have no support and no protection?

2) Money and means. This measure suggests a "one size fits all" approach which does not work, and cannot work, for every school in this state. Not only is it ludicrous to assume that it could, but it takes away energy and resources that could be spent for improving school grounds, securing funds for future projects (Project Graduation, prom, new equipment for sports/arts and humanities, etc) supporting staff, and making sure kids have what they need for success. By forcing this measure on every school, precious dollars that could be spent for better purposes get allocated for what is, in my mind, a cruel practice of making students feel ostracized. There ARE inequalities in sports but this would do nothing to improve upon them, rather it takes away from the bigger picture. If funds were spent to ensure certain students don't get to play a sport or need access to go to the bathroom, we're not spending that on better equipment or ensuring that facilities are up to standards. Does it make more sense to not let a student play a sport based on their gender or spending that money that would prevent them from playing on making sure everyone gets a great space to play in?

3) Freedom and fairness. By focusing our attention on transphobic ideation, we would be allowing our state to be open for litigation. By forcing schools to participate in a humiliation program that only serves to hurt and hinder more than it does to engage, teach compassion, or provide true insight, we leave the door open for lawsuits upon lawsuits. Some folks may not like trans students or trans people, but without proper information or understanding, that hate can escalate into so much more. We need to protect trans kids/youth and let them know they have a space that gives them every opportunity to excel at their craft. We can't change the hearts of every person who has decided to disavow the trans community, but we also don't need to allow bigotry to expand into our communities and make students as well as parents and teachers feel unsafe, either. No one needs to be questioned about what bathroom they use or what sport they want to play. This is a free country where we can choose how we express ourselves and choose how we want to live, and I'd argue that trans people are causing zero harm in that regard, so why bring more trouble on them?

I understand this is an extremely hot button issue and will continue to draw more attention as we head to November. It is my sincerest hope that the committee takes all testimony into consideration and will do the right and humanistic thing, to let trans kids be kids. Let them play the sports they want, go to the bathroom, navigate high

school, and give them every chance they can to succeed just like anyone else.
Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee.