

Karina Chandler
Yarmouth
LD 2239

To the honorable members on the judiciary committee,

My name is Karina Chandler and I'm a mental health care provider, parent, and resident in Yarmouth Maine. I'm writing today in strong opposition to LD 2239.

Every child should have the right to participate on sports teams of their identified gender as well as use the bathroom and locker rooms of their identified gender.

As a trauma therapist, for the past 14 years I've worked with many transgender individuals who have experienced deep emotional trauma from being rejected for being who they are. Many of those individuals felt far safer out of their homes, at their schools and in their communities than they did within their own homes. If schools and public community spaces start feeling unsafe for transgender people many of them will have no where to go. If we start policing bathrooms and sports teams we will be encouraging systemic discrimination, rejection, and trauma on a statewide level that is unforgivable for our young people.

Let's be clear: this proposal is not about protection or fairness. This bill targets a very small, already marginalized group of children, and the only thing they will cause is harm. We are talking about KIDS. Not olympians, not Division one college athletes. CHILDREN, who are trying to figure out who they are in the world, who they want to play with, and with whom they feel safe.

The truth is simple: when transgender youth are affirmed in their identities—when they are respected for who they are—their mental health outcomes are on par with any other kid. But when they are denied that respect, their rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide increase dramatically. Telling trans kids they can no longer play sports with their friends or use the bathrooms and changing room of their gender would guarantee countless mental health crises and tragically increase the chance of suicidality among trans youth in our state.

We should be focusing on how to support all students, not turning schools, public facilities, and sports teams into sites of exclusion and shame.

Please, please oppose this bill and do not let this go
Thank you.

Sincerely, Karina Chandler