

Avery Friend
MaineTransNet
LD 2239

Avery Friend
Portland, Maine
April 13, 2026

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

My name is Avery Friend, I'm a resident of Portland, and I'm writing as a cisgender woman who has spent the last seven years working in community with transgender support and advocacy groups and initiatives across the state. I currently work for Affirming Behavioral Health, a nonprofit behavioral health clinic with a mission of providing expert and affirming mental health services to queer and trans Mainers statewide, and MaineTransNet, a nonprofit with twenty years history of supporting trans Mainers. I am writing in opposition to the proposed ballot measure, LD 2239.

I first became involved in transgender advocacy work approximately a decade ago for what could be considered a selfish reason: it was clear, even then, that the extreme right-wing forces that have gripped our country had identified transgender rights as an effective "wedge issue" to initiate the rollback of rights not only for trans people, but for LGBTQ+ people, women, and relating to reproductive healthcare. As a queer woman, I recognized the threat to myself even then. In the years since, it's become all too clear that not only was this approach effective in doing tremendous harm to trans Americans nationwide, we are, in fact, seeing a violent rollback of rights for the same women and girls that those behind this ballot measure are claiming to "protect". (Of note is that this ballot measure is funded by an out-of-state billionaire whose interests are rooted in influencing the midterm elections and is weaponizing trans kids to do so.)

Any repeal of the hard-won civil right protections we've won over the years, including the Maine Human Rights Act, opens the door further to laws and government policing and controlling of our bodies. Indeed, this proposal is extreme enough that enforcement will demand no less than a horrifying invasion of children's private medical information, with wording vague enough to invite truly terrifying insinuations around how that might be obtained. In any context, that's disturbing; in the context of adults making judgments about the private sex and gender characteristics of children who are simply trying to play school sports and/or literally just use the bathroom, it's nothing short of heinous.

Finally, as a cisgender woman, I want to express how deeply angry I am that in this era of American politics with some of the highest stakes we've ever seen, the question of how one of the country's smallest and most targeted demographics are allowed to exist in public has overshadowed the much, much more salient attacks on women's rights that impact half of America, not just the tiny fraction being targeted here. I invite anyone claiming to care to protect women's rights to consider spending an equally tiny fraction of the time working towards pay equity, justice for sexual assault victims, paid family leave, healthcare and childcare costs, reproductive freedom, the right for married women to participate freely and fairly in elections, racial discrepancies facing BIPOC women, and/or any of the countless injustices impacting women and girls in America. At the very least, those of us actually engaged in that work would quite like to be able to focus on moving forward meaningfully with the issues that actually impact Mainers, not those that are being politicized as part of a national strategy and hurting Maine kids and schools in the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective.