



## Testimony Against LD 2239 An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Dr. Deborah Hagler. I reside in Harpswell. I practiced pediatrics for the last 27 years in the Brunswick area. I currently co-chair the Healthy Mental Development Committee for the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

I am deeply concerned about the upcoming ballot initiative and its consequences for a group of youth that need support from the community. Helping kids navigate the journey into adulthood is complex enough and navigating this with the feeling of gender incongruity is especially complex for both children and those around them. However, experts have come to understand that allowing kids to feel safe and supported makes things better.<sup>1,2</sup>

Transgender and non-binary youth experience higher rates of violence directed against them, bullying, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts than the general adolescent population.<sup>3</sup> However, there is ample research suggesting that creating safe environments and supporting their gender expression decreases mental distress and harm.<sup>1,2</sup>

The Trevor Project reviewed suicide attempts among trans and non-binary youth ages 13-17 from 2018-2022 in states that had passed anti trans legislation versus those who had not and found a significant increase in this age group in suicide attempts in the year following the implementation of this legislation.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, specifically examining bathroom assignments researchers have found a higher incidence of sexual assault directed toward trans students when restrictions were placed on bathroom use versus allowing youth to use a gender-neutral restroom or using the restroom that aligns with their gender identity. Trans gender girls had almost 2 and a half times the odds of experiencing sexual assault when expected to use the restroom of their natal sex.<sup>5</sup>

Short of making gender neutral bathrooms available for all, how can this ever be successfully enforced. Are we looking at a world where everyone will need “papers” at school to use a restroom? Will there be genital inspections? This is indeed a formula for a frightening future.

Most youth will not go on to become professional athletes or compete at a very high level of sport. Sports participation for youth creates opportunities for exercise, friendships, lessons in teamwork, shared responsibilities. Banning these opportunities from the small group of youth that may benefit is shortsighted and denies opportunities.

After decades of working with youth and families support - at all levels family, medical, school, and community is critical for youth - ALL YOUTH. I strongly encourage the defeat of this referendum.

AND TRANSGENDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS, Michael Yogman, Rebecca Baum, Thresia B. Gambon, Arthur Lavin, Gerri Mattson, Lawrence Sagin Wissow, Cora Breuner, Elizabeth M. Alderman, Laura K. Grubb, Makia E. Powers, Krishna Upadhy, Stephenie B. Wallace, Lynn Hunt, Anne Teresa Gearhart, Christopher Harris, Kathryn Melland Lowe, Chadwick Taylor Rodgers, Ilana Michelle Sherer; Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents. *Pediatrics* October 2018; 142 (4): e20182162. 10.1542/peds.2018-2162

## 2Trevor Project

3.Suarez NA, Trujillo L, McKinnon II, Mack KA, Lyons B, Robin L, Carman-McClanahan M, Pampati S, Cezair KLR, Ethier KA. Disparities in School Connectedness, Unstable Housing, Experiences of Violence, Mental Health, and Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors Among Transgender and Cisgender High School Students - Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2023. *MMWR Suppl.* 2024 Oct 10;73(4):50-58. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.su7304a6. PMID: 39378210; PMCID: PMC11559675.

4Lee, W.Y., Hobbs, J.N., Hobaica, S. *et al.* State-level anti-transgender laws increase past-year suicide attempts among transgender and non-binary young people in the USA. *Nat Hum Behav* 8, 2096–2106 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-01979-5>

5.Murchison GR, Agénor M, Reisner SL, Watson RJ. School Restroom and Locker Room Restrictions and Sexual Assault Risk Among Transgender Youth. *Pediatrics*. 2019 Jun;143(6):e20182902. doi: 10.1542/peds.