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

My name is Eric Nathanson of Scarborough, Maine. I will be brief. My views on this ballot measure are simple: it shouldn't exist. There is no problem it is solving, period.

The only reason it does exist is because an out of state billionaire is trying to shove his bigotry down our throats, keep us fighting each other instead of recognizing who causes the real problems in society, and waste our time and energy fighting this instead of accomplishing real beneficial change for Mainers.

This measure is, simply and plainly, bullying. It wants to use the power and authority of the state to harm children. Nothing more and nothing less.

Every supposed reason why we might need something like this is a fallacy cooked up in the imaginations of right wing media and their billionaire owners to try and scare us. Trans and non-binary kids are a very small portion of the population. Most youth sports are co-ed already at least until middle school and often until high school. Trans folks have no notable advantage in sports, and the majority of people who would be affected by this bill are pre-pubescent kids anyway. There are no boys pretending to be girls to sneak onto a different team (or vice versa, but you'll notice right wing fear mongers never seem to talk about women playing on men's teams). The list goes on, and every one of their talking points is quickly and easily debunked.

But more importantly, this bill is intended to cause harm. The first and most directly harmed will be the trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming kids who just want to be kids, express themselves, play sports, and hang out with their friends, who will instead be bullied, questioned, and potentially outed against their will by full grown adults, to say nothing of their peers. The only question we should be asking any child about sports is, do you want to play? The only question a child should need to answer before they use the bathroom is where do I feel comfortable? But the harm will not stop with the LGBTQ community. Anyone who does not have easy access to documentation, refugee and asylum seekers, children who have had to flee domestic violence and abusive households, kids in the foster system, temporarily staying with relatives, or currently experiencing homelessness, the list goes on and on. Those who are already vulnerable and in precarious positions will be further harmed.

Cis women, girls really since we are talking about children, will also be harmed. Want to wear more masc clothes or cut your hair short? Suddenly you'll be accused of being trans, as if that's a bad thing. Are you a rising star in your sport? All a jealous rival or their vindictive parent has to do is claim you're secretly a different gender and your playing can be derailed. We've also seen that women from racial minorities, especially black women, are more likely to be targeted by these kinds of attacks. Do you not look or act the way a middle aged, white Karen thinks you should? This ballot measure, if passed, would suddenly empower her to publicly question your sex and gender and surround you in a firestorm of controversy.

The right wing media and political operatives who push these types of measures pretend that they are trying to "support women" and "protect women's sports" even as they transparently oppose anything in our society which would benefit women, such as access to reproductive and gender affirming healthcare, equal pay, paid family and medical leave, stronger protections for victims of domestic violence, or equal funding for and screen time for girls and women's sports, to name just a few examples of where their energy would go if they were genuine in their desires. Since you can not vote down a ballot measure, perhaps the committee would consider writing an option B which shows what supporting women, girls, and LGBTQ kids REALLY looks like targeting one of my examples above. Just a thought.

I hope you will strongly voice your opposition to bullying children and further

surveilling us as a society. Schools and school boards shouldn't be wasting their time and energy on private, personal decisions which are none of their business. Children should not be bullied at the hands of the state. I hope you will use every ounce of bully pulpit, media connections, and personal influence you may have to protect Maine kids and their families from this disastrous idea. We don't need anything about this measure, and it is a shame we even have to waste time on it.

Thank you for your time.