

Savannah Sessions  
Lovell, Maine  
LD 2239

Dear Senator Carney and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing today in strong opposition to this proposed legislation.

This bill raises significant concerns about fairness, inclusion, and the role of public schools in supporting all students. While framed as a clarification of athletic participation, it would effectively exclude and stigmatize transgender and gender-expansive youth, which undermines the sense of belonging that schools are meant to foster.

I, like many others, was shaped by participation in school-based sports. School athletics are about much more than competition - they provide opportunities for teamwork, confidence-building, community connection, and fun. Restricting participation based solely on sex assigned at birth denies some students access to these benefits and sends a harmful message that they are not fully welcome.

The bill's rigid definition of sex oversimplifies a complex reality and places schools, educators, coaches, etc. in a difficult position. Educators and coaches would be tasked with enforcing policies that raise serious concerns about student privacy, dignity, and well-being. In the vast majority (78%) of reported cases of sexual abuse against children and adolescents in organized sport, a coach was reported as the perpetrator (Rulofs et al., 2019a). If the goal is to protect our students, then legislation should focus on addressing the real needs and risks our students face.

At its core, this legislation moves away from the values of equity and respect that Maine's schools diligently work to nurture every day. Policymakers should instead support schools in creating environments where every student can participate fully, feel safe, and belong.

Respectfully submitted,  
Savannah Sessions