

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

My name is Kimberly Simmons, I am a feminist sociologist but speak only for myself and not for the University system where I teach. I am opposed to the proposed ballot measure, LD 2239.

This ballot initiative distorts the idea of who poses a threat to Maine girls, in relation to freedom from violence and sexual harassment and in relation to access to athletics. These distortions were so well documented at the last public hearing on this issue - and the one before that - that it is not for lack of knowing. Instead, this ballot initiative is meant to stir up hate, dehumanization, and cruelty through a purposeful disinformation campaign. I ask that you all take a moment and consider if you truly want to harm children in order to score political points by spreading hateful propaganda?

The harm that comes from endless conversations that question the full humanity of any population is also well documented and we know the path to violence and genocide begins with dehumanizing language and stereotyping¹. The Trevor Project found anti-trans laws increased suicidality among trans and nonbinary youth², and another study has shown a steep increase in depression that tracks to the steep increase in public debate about civil rights for all of us, with 86% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported that debates about anti-transgender laws had a negative impact on their mental health.³ That we are again having this public conversation does unnecessary harm.

It is particularly egregious to appropriate the language “Protect Maine Girls” when the harms facing Maine girls are so well documented in the Maine Youth Integrated Health

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352250X2600045X>

² <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/anti-transgender-laws-cause-up-to-72-increase-in-suicide-attempts-among-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth-study-shows/>

³ <https://assets.aclu.org/live/uploads/2024/08/Impact-AntiTrans-Law-Research-Brief-FINAL.pdf>

Study.⁴ It is men whose sex on their birth certificates match their gender who overwhelmingly pose the most threat in relation to gender based violence⁵ - and the refusal to confront this reality, fund prevention and response programs, and address root causes of male violence shows an absolute lack of concern for girls in Maine. To scapegoat trans girls instead of engaging with evidence based solutions is tantamount to mocking survivors, advocates and educators. We beg you to address the real problem.

Research on athletics highlights sex discrimination at the structural level not the inclusion of trans or nonbinary students as the barrier to equal opportunity for girls in K12 sports.⁶ If Maine wants to encourage more athletic participation and opportunity for excellence, we need to invest in more opportunities for all kids to play Equal access to athletics also requires investing in kids well-being overall — to Protect Maine Girls, protect all Maine kids living in poverty - it's hard to be an elite athlete when hungry.⁷

Disregard for what Maine girls have told us could keep them safer and improve their quality of life and their futures is a significant failure of adult leadership. The imposition of this threat to their bodily autonomy, self actualization and identification, and to their cohesion in community is cruel. Reject this ploy to divide us and spend time this summer listening to youth - they truly need us to care about all of their futures.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Simmons, PhD
Portland, Maine

⁴ <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/2025-fact-sheets>

⁵ https://www.nsvrc.org/blog_post/new-nisvs-data-sexual-violence-and-sexual-identity-key-findings-and-prevention/

⁶ <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Chasing-Equity-Full-Report-Web.pdf>

<https://nwlc.org/resource/the-battle-for-gender-equity-in-athletics-in-elementary-and-secondary-schools/>

⁷ <http://www.maine.gov/future/hunger/dashboard/food-insecurity-rates>