

Ashley Smith
Belgrade, Maine
April 14th, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Ashley Smith, I'm a resident of Belgrade, and I'm present today in opposition to proposed Ballot Measure, LD 2239.

This bill a direct attack on the dignity and worth of Maine children. It perpetuates further dismantling of the Civil Rights Movement and is a massive threat to the fundamental principles of our democracy. The intent to legislate exclusion and discrimination amongst students is less about fairness and more about domination and authoritarianism.

It is not by accident that our schools have become the battleground for these attacks. The public school system is one of our largest institutions and is vital to the development or the destruction of democracy. Scapegoating children who participate in athletics to stir up horizontal hostility is an unforgivable act. To learn that the funding for this bill can be traced to an out-of-state billionaire who actively supports the merging of church and state is a clear indication that this part of a much larger antidemocratic agenda. It is imperative that we not only understand that these measures were taken to further erode the fundamental principles of democracy, but that it was also done at the expense of Maine children.

I cannot help but imagine what the money spent towards promoting this extremely divisive bill could have provided to the 600 public schools that span across the state. Instead, it decimates inclusivity and threatens the safety of our children and democracy. The widespread economic stress, the disparity between the affluent and the impoverished, and current events make this an extremely fertile time for injustice and discrimination. We cannot allow it to happen in our state. I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 2239.