

Myles Smith
Portland, Maine
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To the Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Myles Smith, I am a resident of Portland, youth sports coach, and father of a daughter and a nonbinary child. I am also a graduate of Maine public schools. **I am opposed to the proposed ballot measure, LD 2239.**

In the real world, where they live and I and other parents coach, sports are about teaching values. Values like courage, compassion, positive self-regard, strategic thinking, teamwork, perseverance, resilience, sportsmanship, kindness, empathy, and integrity. My kid is not the only nonbinary athlete in their baseball league, and yet no one is there to parse anyone's gender identity. They're there to play ball with their pals.

Yet some adults insist on forcing all of us to value paperwork, pointless bureaucracy, and endless culture wars. They want us to value their cultural imaginations over and above all the actual reasons kids play sports. They want to enforce their rules in the real world we all live in, where some things are complicated and defy easy answers. Whatever the proponents say they want, their ballot measure won't protect my kids, their sports, or anyone else from anything in the real world. The real world is messy, imperfect, challenging, and unfair.

Let's establish one thing – sports are not 'fair'.

When I was in high school, there was a girl on our otherwise all boys baseball team. She used the girls' locker room, or a stall to change. The players and coaches all figured this out immediately and easily. At the time, we probably all thought of her as a Tom-boy, but mostly, we didn't think about it. It just wasn't a big deal. We sorted it out as a team, and were all better for having had the experience. Was it fair for her to compete against boys? Is it fair because it was her choice?

Another story. An extended family member received prescription steroids (aka gender-affirming care) as a teen to address his severe allergies and asthma, which had also stunted his growth somewhat. In a couple years, he had shot past his peers, and was soon an offensive lineman for a Maine Class A high school football team. Maybe some smaller kid got cut or lost playing time as a result of his medically-prescribed physical alteration. Is it 'fair' that some kids get this treatment, and others don't? Is it fair for kids who similarly need it, but their parents can't afford it? Should the kid who was treated be excluded?

Consider the kid born to wealthy parents, who hand their kid a leg up on all the kids of working parents with thousands of dollars in skills clinics and one-on-one lessons. Fair, or no? What about the kid who is smart, quick, hard working, but just plain small. How long are they going to last in volleyball or basketball? When they get benched or cut for the gangly, uncoordinated,

fairly uncommitted kid who is a foot taller and was recruited by the team's coach, is that fair? The confluence of genetics and luck elevates one kid at the expense of some other, doesn't it?

There are fewer trans girls playing on girls' high school teams in Maine than you can count on one hand. And they deserve to be treated with care by their community. In Portland, I trust our kids, and their awesome, supportive school staff, to figure this stuff out with us parents. And I know we'd all agree that we should be far more focused on getting real resources to the deaf kids, the kids with disabilities, the kids who are still learning English, and the kids who need an academic push, than on fairness in sports.

If sports aren't fair, why do they matter? They matter because of the values that we learn in play, and the joy it brings. These are pretty much the same reasons that theater, improv, band, or any other collective extracurricular activity matter, and many of these programs are dying out in our schools. We also have hundreds of crumbling school buildings, and towns that can barely afford to heat them, let alone find and retain good teachers. These challenges are real, and they matter.

I'm not worried about my daughter playing sports with trans kids, and she's not either. She's worried about the actual ancient locker rooms in her real life school being in shambles. I'm worried about her being hit by a driver while walking to school, and that she's learning all she can when she gets there.

So if there's any girl dads out in Maine who want to actually support kids, send them to their nearest public school with a tool belt and put them to work fixing up those old locker rooms, and have their billionaire trust fund baby culture war financiers buy the teams some new volleyballs. Do stuff that the kids actually want, and that actually helps them. Because this is not it.