



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
LD 2239 An Act to Designate School Sports Participation and Facilities by Sex
April 14, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Committee:

I am Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches (a coalition of seven mainline Protestant denominations with over 400 congregations and more than 50,000 parishioners in Maine)...

And I don't want to be here. Because it might imply that I or the Council believe it's legitimate to debate the humanity, dignity, and rights of our fellow human beings, our trans siblings. This would contradict what's central to the Christian* faith—the belief that **every person is a beloved child of God, that to treat them as anything less is an affront to their Creator, and that we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves.**

Proponents of this appalling referendum will likely say **they're not debating trans people's humanity, they're just "trying to protect girls and women."**

But beneath the surface of that argument **you'll find contempt for trans people, a hatred fueled by fear, not facts, and certainly not by faith.**

The Maine Council of Churches stands up to protect Maine's girls and women—that's why we've shown up this Session to fight for funding for our state's sexual assault and domestic violence programs. Where were anti-trans advocates during *those* hearings? **If they truly were concerned about the safety of girls and women, they'd focus on the real threats, you know, the ones that come from straight, cisgender men. Because that's who harasses, abuses, assaults, rapes and kills girls and women. Trans girls do not.** They just want to play sports with their classmates and use bathrooms and locker rooms where *they* won't be assaulted.

This referendum was never about protecting Maine's girls and women. It's about reaching a base who can be **rallied by fear and hatred of a small group of vulnerable people.**

But **the bible and God are clear** about hatred and fear: **God loves and stands with the vulnerable, persecuted and oppressed and expects us to love and stand with them, too.** And over and over again, throughout the bible, **God says to humanity, "Do not be afraid."**

Thus, a referendum fueled by fear and hatred contradicts these biblical teachings. And it contradicts the national policies of the five Christian denominations on our Council (Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist) that affirm the sacred worth and full welcome, inclusion, and dignity of transgender and non-binary individuals, declare them beloved by God, and seek to protect them from discrimination.

As I said, I really don't want to be here. But **to cede this ground to those persecuting our vulnerable neighbors and stoking fear and hatred among everyone else is not an option. My faith, and the faith espoused by members of the Maine Council of Churches, compels me to be here standing with and for trans kids.**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

*The Maine Council of Churches includes Unitarian Universalists and Quakers, but today I will limit my remarks to the teaching of our five Protestant Christian denominations because I know that the testimony of my colleague, the Rev. Dr. Jodi Hayashida of Multifaith Justice Maine, a Unitarian Universalist minister and member of the MCC Board of Directors, will address the broader landscape of faith traditions.

Testimony of Rev. Dr. Jodi Hayashida

Jodi is the Director of Multifaith Justice Maine, and the Unitarian Universalist representative and a ruling officer on MCC's Board of Directors

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am the Rev. Dr. Jodi Cohen Hayashida, I organize Multifaith Justice Maine, and I oppose LD 2239.

Last fall, I sat next to a young woman at one of the Lewiston polling locations as she collected signatures for this ballot measure. She lived in Colorado but had driven up that morning from Massachusetts where she had been working on another campaign. She hadn't fully read the proposed measure and was hazy on the details. I couldn't tell whether or not she agreed with it. It didn't really matter, for her it was a way to pay the bills. Most of the people I saw add their signature to the proposed measure also didn't read it. And that didn't matter either, because more often than not what I saw and heard as people signed was simple excitement at the opportunity to stick it to the trans community. It was vicious and it was gleeful.

In my work I spend every day in conversation with people of faith who differ in worship, in belief, in language, and who don't all like each other all the time. In our differences, though, we are held together by a shared belief that we are called to love each other. To recognize every life as sacred. To push through discomfort and treat even the fearsome stranger as beloved, knowing that when we do, in time the stranger often becomes the beloved in truth.

This ballot measure refutes the invitation of every faith tradition to do the hard and holy work of moving towards those whom we do not yet understand and instead panders to our weakest and most fearful selves. It turns our anger at the legitimate ways the girls of this state are under threat into a mockery and then into a weapon against another vulnerable community. All for political gain.

Maine can do better.

All Mainers deserve better.

I ask that you oppose this ballot measure.