

**Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee**  
**Opponent Testimony on HB 151**  
**Minna Zelch**  
**December 13, 2022**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 151.

My name is Minna Zelch and I use she/her pronouns. I'm the parent of two Ohio public school students, one of whom happens to be a transgender athlete. To be clear, I think HB 151 on its own is a good bill. I'm here today to speak about the amendment attached to this bill that would prevent transgender girls from playing sports.

According to the OHSAA, fifteen transgender girls have been approved to play girls' sports in grades 7-12 since 2015. That's 15 girls in 8 years. So far this year, 4 trans girls have been approved to play. The OHSAA governs about 350,000 athletes every year, half of whom are girls. This means that so far this year, only .00002286% of female athletes in Ohio are transgender.

As you know, the OHSAA already has a process in place to ensure fairness for all athletes. I can tell you from experience that this approval process is daunting. Students must apply every year for every sport they want to play. My daughter spends January and February practicing with her team, knowing full well she might never play a game. We turn over blood tests showing her estrogen and testosterone levels, a list of all the medications she takes along with how long she has been taking them, and her height and weight growth charts. The process is embarrassing, anxiety inducing, and exhausting, but worth it if it means my kid will get to play a sport she loves.

Just to give you some context to understand how little of an advantage my child has, Ember has given me permission to share her personal medical details. According to the Mayo Clinic, the normal total testosterone range for 17-18 year-old males is 300-1,200 nanograms per deciliter<sup>1</sup> (ng/dL). For 17-18 year old females the range is 20-75 ng/dL<sup>1</sup>. At my daughters last blood draw in October, her total testosterone level was 12 ng/dL. This suggests that based on testosterone, most cisgender females actually have a biological advantage over my child.

Ember has already told you why planning on the boys' team is not an option for her. But she left out a critical detail that her father and I have to consider as her parents, the fact that this simply would not be safe for her. When she took PE a group of boys in the class spent the semester targeting her for harassment. They called her words I will not repeat, tried to trip her, and kicked and threw balls at her head. She broke her ankle in that class. Three weeks later, a ball was kicked at her face and she broke her finger. Both injuries eventually required surgeries and 18 months of recovery. If this is what boys did during a coed class, imagine what they might

do if she was forced to play on their sports team. As her parents, we could not risk her physical safety by letting her participate in such a toxic environment.

As a woman, and former athlete, the most disturbing aspect of this law is that it is an attack on all girls. Even without genital inspections and pelvic exams, this legislation subjects female bodies to judgement. It forces girls to prove their gender and an accusation alone means that something about that girl made someone think they aren't female enough. No real girl can run that fast or hit that hard so you must be a boy. You're really big, you look like a boy. You aren't very pretty, maybe you're really a boy.

While such situations may sound far-fetched, this is precisely what just happened in Utah. The state athletic organization investigated an athlete without her or her family's knowledge because they thought "it might be offensive" and they wanted to "spare them embarrassment".<sup>2</sup> The association noted that there have been multiple accusations against other students since the state's ban went into effect with accusers claiming the "athlete doesn't look feminine enough".<sup>2</sup> This is what we have to look forward to in Ohio; witch hunts where no girl is safe and girls who are especially good at their sport are most at risk.

This legislation is nothing but a targeted attack on transgender kids, who are already some of the most vulnerable members of our society. It dehumanizes trans girls. It subjects all girls to body shaming and potential cruel accusations. It is an attempt to solve a problem that has never existed in this state.

Ohio currently has a system that requires transgender athletes to out themselves to their athletic departments and the OHSA, submit medical documentation that they do not have a physical or biological advantage, and obtain approval to be part of an athletic team. This legislation would scrap that in favor of a system that instead would risk subjecting 175,000 girls a year to accusations that they are not real girls, all because 15 transgender girls have played a girls' sport.

My daughter is a girl. She knows she is a girl the same way my son knows he is left-handed. No one told them they were this way. No one encouraged them. This is just how they were born. Transgender girls are girls. They deserve the same basic rights that are given to every other student. They want the opportunity to make friends, work hard, and support their peers. They want the camaraderie of being part of a team. They just want to play.

I ask you to please consider my testimony and vote no on this useless and harmful amendment. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mayocliniclabs.com/test-catalog/overview/8508#Clinical-and-Interpretive>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2022-08-18/utah-officials-secretly-looked-into-female-athletes-gender>