

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Committee thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Melissa McLaren, I use she/her pronouns, and I am the proud mother of a transgender daughter, a senior, who has participated in middle school and high school sports. I am here to ask you to remove the amendment to HB 151 that bans transgender girls from playing on girl's sports teams.

As you are aware, the Ohio High School Athletic Association has a successful process in place for managing transgender athletes. Each year that my daughter has played, someone from Nationwide Children's THRIVE fills out a form, writes a letter, and shares our daughter's actual lab values to ensure she didn't have a biologic advantage over cisgender girls. Our daughter has been on hormone blockers since the start of puberty so her testosterone levels are actually lower than the rest of the girls on her team. Seeing as how there have only been 15 trans girls playing on girls sports teams since 2015, I'm genuinely baffled as to why there are fears that women's sports needs saved from trans girls. I can think of many other threats to girls' sports than what these 15 girls have done over the past seven years.

I know the original bill didn't include an amendment to bans transgender girls from playing girls sports. I watched in dismay last June when the Save Women's Sports Act was added last minute and then voted on. That happened during the same time that many parents like me were calling some of you about House Bill 454, which would have banned gender-affirming care for kids like mine. And, over the past few months, things have been really hard with the threat of

House Bill 454, the resolution in the Ohio State Board of Education that attacks transgender youth, and now the amendment of this bill.

I don't know how many of you are parents. I don't know if you've had to teach your child's school about a private medical matter year after year because they've had so few kids like yours before her. And I don't know if any of you have had a child be the center of political culture wars. Our daughter told us she was a girl when she was three and she's 17 now so we've been doing this a long time. We've been asked inappropriate questions about her body from near strangers, people feel free to just share their unasked opinion on why our daughter is trans like there has to be some reason or justification for who she is, and some people have made just really awful assumptions and felt free to share them with us. And the last year had been one of the hardest, not because having a trans child is so hard, because it's not. She's amazing and I'm so proud of her. Our medical team is fantastic and we're lucky to have them. It's been hard because we have to make phone calls and emails to many of you. And now, testify defending her right to have evidence-based medical care, and join a sports team so she can sing songs from Pitch Perfect on the bus and throw up on the field after doing too many burpees. It honestly feels ridiculous that it has to be this hard.

But having a child at the center of political fighting is terrifying and it's never been as dangerous as it is right now. There is a never-ending stream of poorly informed articles about puberty blockers, legislation targeting trans youth is everywhere, Children's Hospitals are targets of bomb threats for providing gender-affirming care, violent rhetoric is increasing, and ten days ago, groups including the

Proud Boys, some of them with guns, showed up just a few miles away, to protest an event sponsored by a school and held at a church because it involved members in drag.

All of this proposed legislation has an impact. I was sick that Saturday looking at the video clips of people descending on our community with their hate and their guns to intimidate all of us. And when you imply that we need to save women's sports from kids like mine because she is a threat, it tells groups like the Proud Boys that she is a threat.

The legislation proposed over the past year that has been attacking transgender youth puts a target on their back. It puts a target on our children's hospitals. Your words and your actions matter and what you decide to do about this bill matters. We are talking about 15 girls over seven years going through a very successful process to ensure a level playing field. But bills like this do nothing to improve women's sports and instead can have far reaching negative consequences when we have hate groups looking for reasons to act on their hate. It cannot be your intention to put a target on my child when you write these bills but that is the impact these bills are having. Please, don't pass legislation that puts my family more at risk.