



**Statement by Anne Lieberman
Director of Policy & Programs, Athlete Ally
before the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
in opposition to House Bill 151 & Senate Bill 132**

Dear Chairman Brenner and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Anne Lieberman and I am the Director of Policy & Programs at Athlete Ally, a national nonprofit working with professional athletes, teams, leagues, and college athletic departments to ensure everyone has equal opportunities in and access to sport. I am also a three-time national Muay Thai kickboxing champion and coach and have been involved in gender equity in sports for over a decade. Thank you for considering my concerns raised in opposition to House Bill 151 & Senate Bill 132.

I was born and raised in Pittsburgh and spent a lot of time in Ohio playing sports. I am proud to be from our part of the country, and I love how important sports have been to my personal and professional development. As an awkward kid who wasn't sure where I fit in, playing basketball and lacrosse were the only spaces where I could be myself and create lasting friendships. It is no exaggeration to say that sports saved my life -- which is why it is so heartbreaking to see how sports is being used to bully and dehumanize transgender youth in Ohio.

HB 151/SB132 is a solution in search of a problem. All major sport governing bodies including the International Olympic Committee and the NCAA support the inclusion of transgender athletes at the highest levels of sport, and do so after years of research and stakeholder engagement.¹ Development of these policies should be left to experts at sport governing bodies, and these bills interfere with experts' ability to do their jobs. They are examples of government overreach and surveillance that will single out a vulnerable group of youth who already face extreme bullying and harassment simply for participating in the sports they love.

Moreover, HB 151/SB132 is part of a larger trend -- fueled and funded by national-level organizations -- to influence and interfere with state politics, particularly around youth identity. All of these bills seek to single out transgender young people and subsequently increase bullying and harassment by preventing them from participating in the sports they love. The Ohio I know and love is not one that passes legislation that puts kids in danger.

Finally, and perhaps most important, HB 151/SB132 does nothing to actually protect women and girls in sport. At Athlete Ally, we feel strongly that we need to invest more resources into women and girls in sport and that we should listen and follow the lead of organizations and advocates who have been fighting for gender equity for decades. Bills like HB 151/SB132 are a distraction from the real issues women and girls face every single day - from sexual harassment and abuse by coaches to far fewer opportunities to play

¹ IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations. (2021). Available online at

https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/News/2021/11/IOC-Framework-Fairness-Inclusion-Non-discrimination-2021.pdf?_ga=2.116948229.2094909257.1637082260-499116176.1634933505.

at the middle school and high school level.² That is why leading national women's organizations including The Women's Sports Foundation and hundreds of women pro, Olympic and Paralympic athletes have consistently expressed loud opposition to bills identical to HB 151/SB132.³

To quote Megan Rapinoe, two-time World Cup Champion and Co-Captain of the US Women's National Soccer Team: "We can't make demands for a false sense of fairness while ignoring the actual needs of women and girls."

Women athletes know what the real challenges to women's sports are -- and having a transgender teammate is simply not one of them.

If you pass this bill, you will be no closer to actually addressing the issues women and girls face in sport. Instead, you will actively hurt children. I urge you to reject HB 151/SB132 and protect all of Ohio's youth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted by:



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² Staurowsky, E. J., Watanabe, N., Cooper, J., Cooky, C., Lough, N., Paule-Koba, A., Pharr, J., Williams, S., Cummings, S., Issokson-Silver, K., & Snyder, M. (2020). Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women. New York, NY: Women's Sports Foundation. Available online at https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/articles_and_report/chasing-equity-the-triumphs-challenges-and-opportunities-in-sports-for-girls-and-women/

³ For example, see

https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/press_release/billie-jean-king-megan-rapinoe-and-candace-parker-join-nearly-200-athletes-supporting-trans-youth-participation-in-sports/;

https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/womens-groups-sign-on-letter-trans-sports-4.1.19.pdf