

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Committee thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Mikael McLaren, I use he/him pronouns, and I am the father 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.

On the first day of June, 2022, both the beginning of Pride Month, and my birthday, I spent time here in the Capitol listening to the proposal of HB 61, the "Save Women's Sports Act," an example of government overreach and intervention. It sought to overrule both the Ohio High School Athletic Association and the NCAA's pre-existing policies with a series of "safeguards" that included genital examinations of any athlete who was brought into question. It seemed, after those hearings, that the bill would not advance. Then, almost literally in the dead of night, it was tacked on to a bill that was intended to help Ohio teachers with greater levels of professional development and support.

This is the second time that because this bill could not stand on its own merit, Rep Jena Powell attached it to an unrelated bill in an effort to subvert the legislative process, and skip the standard legislative procedure of being vetted through committee. Rather than call her out on her efforts to silence the voice of the voters of Ohio, and the blatant break from the normal process, the amendment was added with support from her party.

Fifteen students in the past 7 years have undergone the procedures put in place by the Ohio High School Athletic Association, including my daughter. The standards of the OHSAA include that athletes have completed a minimum of one year of hormone treatment related to gender transition and/or demonstrate to the Executive Director's Office by way of sound medical evidence that she does not possess physical (bone structure, muscle mass, testosterone, hormonal, etc.) or physiological advantages over genetic females of the same age group. In any case where a transgender student athlete is taking hormone treatment related to gender transition and an approval is needed from the Executive Directors Office, that treatment must be monitored by a physician and the Executive Director's Office may request reports on this treatment depending on the situation. My daughter played JV Field Hockey for three years, and ran Cross Country in middle school. She wanted to be part of a team, and went through the above process four separate times. Her enthusiasm for being part of a team, in all instances, outweighed her abilities in her chosen sports. She wanted to be part of a team, to experience the highs and lows, and learn how to work with others toward a common goal.

Fifteen students in 7 years. This is what we are saving sports from? Fifteen student athletes? This is the pressing need of Ohio? Or is this an opportunity to bank political capital? Items like this have brought groups like the Proud Boys into our communities, and have catapulted our state into the national spotlight. We recently had Brendan Shea, a member of the Ohio State Board of Education featured on John Oliver when he spread the misinformation of litter boxes in bathrooms for students who identify as cats.

I will end with a quote from Alana Jochem, the Executive Director of Equality Ohio. “The Health and safety of our youth are not negotiable. This should not be a partisan issue, and we are appalled that our lawmakers are once again causing real harm to the LGBTQ=+ youth to score political points. All Ohio youth deserve the opportunity to play on a sports team with their peers without having to hide who they are.”