

## Emily Brown

Thank you for considering my concerns raised in opposition to House Bill 151 and Senate Bill 132, the Save Women's Sports Act. This dangerous legislation targets an already vulnerable group of Ohio youth and denies them the often life saving opportunity to participate in sports.

The role of the government is not to police children and their bodies, it is to protect them, and trans children are just like any other children. Children should not be forced to disclose their birth certificate (especially if it does not align with their gender), or expose their genitalia to medical personnel to participate in sports. Children will identify as they are, and no one should have to examine their bodies or provide documentation of their genitalia to allow them to participate in sports. The idea of "protecting women's/(girls) sports" is very similar to gatekeeping participation of women, girls, trans, and intersex individuals in other facets of society and upholds damaging mindsets that women and girls (whether cisgender or trans) need to be separated to "protect them". This segregation teaches children early on that they are separate and unequal because their differences in genitalia and body appearance require separation. It also perpetuates harmful and misleading stereotypes that women and girls are inferior to men and boys when it comes to physical activity which is simply not true) This mindset also excludes intersex, nonbinary, and other individuals that do not have "typical" genitalia and/or do not conform to gender norms. Allowing schools, governing agencies, and sporting industries to treat trans girls as boys and trans boys as girls, is not only disrespectful to those children, but this promotes toxic mindsets around gender, genitalia, and sports. If children want to participate in sports that align with their gender they should be able to do so, however, gendered sports inherently puts emphasis on segregation of the sexes which is also extremely detrimental to equality amongst all children and leaves trans individuals, gender nonconforming individuals and nonbinary individuals out of the conversation.

Growing up in Ohio as a cis-gendered female, I did not participate in sports for several reasons but the biggest deterrent was that many sports had separation by perceived gender/sex and because of this I couldn't play with my friends of different sizes and genders because sports were segregated. Instead, I chose after-school activities that were inclusive (most of which were not sports-related) because sports were segregated by gender while after-school activities such as band/orchestra and academic team were open to all and I got to engage with friends that were all genders and even trans children. When we limit our children's interactions between those of different body types and genders through segregation of the sexes (as defined by genitalia), we limit how they perceive each other and with those limitations comes discrimination and further segregation in other areas of society such as workforce discrimination between the sexes, genders, and sexualities. We need to be giving our children inclusive opportunities to reduce bullying, prevent suicide, and prevent discrimination. When we separate them due to genitalia we teach them inferiority, we teach them bias, and we teach them that separate yet "equal" in sports is acceptable when it is not (see *Brown v. Board of Education*). We have many instances of successful co-ed/multi-gender sports in communities, and segregating children based on body parts not only promotes stereotyping but is inherently discriminatory. While gendered sports will be continued regardless of my personal feelings on arbitrary gender labels,

children should be able to participate in sports they enjoy and do it in a way that reaffirms and aligns with their gender identity to prevent discrimination.

I have written this testimony to say let children be who they are and not police their bodies. No child needs to go through this traumatic discrimination because of their bodies on top of all the complexities of growing up. No child should be forced to conform to gender norms or regulations because of the genitalia they were born with or not. Trans people are people, trans children are children and should be treated with dignity and respect. No child should be excluded from sports, education, healthcare, or any other fundamental human right for any reason, let alone because of how they choose to identify or what genitalia they have. So please, for all that is good, keep the regulating eyes of government out of the medical records of children and keep the hands of government out of the pants of our children.

I urge you to oppose HB151 and SB132 and protect our state's athletes.