

Michael Finklestein

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.

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Ohio. A substantial amount of my time is spent working with LGBTQ+ youth and adults. One consistent theme seen among these clients, and borne out by research from The Trevor Project and other organizations, is the disastrous impact of exclusion and discrimination on LGBTQ+ individuals' mental health. More than half of transgender/non-binary youth seriously considered completing suicide last year. Of LGBTQ+ who attempted suicide in the last year 1 in 4 reported being discriminated against based on their gender identity. The science is clear - to support any bill that discriminates against or in any way excludes persons because of their sexual or gender identities is supporting youth self-harm, suicide and overall declining mental health. Moreover, activities such as sports provide crucial opportunities for LGBTQ+ individuals to find acceptance, purpose and excellence. To ban transgender athletes from competing would unquestionably mirror actions taken by Nazi Germany to prevent Jews from competing in the Olympics. It is not the purpose or responsibility of legislative bodies to judge the "worthiness" of individuals. If we are to be a Land of the Free, then it can never be acceptable to discriminate against or exclude a human being based on characteristics of biology including age, race, gender, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual orientation, or other genetic factors.

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