

Elliot Adkins

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.

As a transgender Ohioan, the attempts to limit trans students from athletic opportunities with their peers is deeply upsetting to hear. When I attended Norwalk High School in Huron County, I felt impending doom as gym class was an approaching academic requirement. I knew about the sex segregated facilities, the sex based grouping, and knew as a transgender person, I wasn't welcome in either of the changing rooms- as staff already only wanted me to use single occupant restrooms. I had to travel across the school to the one single stall men's restroom whenever I had to go, or I was left uncomfortably avoiding the bathroom all day until I went home.

Because of these factors, I felt alienated in the few days I remained in gym class. I nervously ran through the girl's changing room, refusing to change my clothes. I nervously walked to the girls side when the teacher split the class, not wanting to cause trouble, but feeling embarrassed and dehumanized. I wanted to avoid this class by possibly doing sports, but I knew I wouldn't be able to play on the team that affirmed my gender, so I ended up dropping the class and doing an online gym course. This class I did alone on a laptop, with no games to build teamwork skills and relationships with my peers, just multiple choice questions on fitness and nutrition.

This was one of the many compounding factors that made me feel unseen, uncared for, and unwelcome by my school, making me dread waking up in the morning, taking the bus, and being a student. These feelings directly impacted my grades, my relationship with my classmates, and my academic outlook for the future. It made me believe that no academic institution would care about me, so putting in effort to maintain a GPA and work towards college seemed like a bleak and useless decision. With these feelings weighed down on me, without the support I needed from my school, forcing me to be an advocate for myself and other students like me, I wasn't able to have the same educational opportunities as my cisgender peers.

No student should feel like this and be robbed of the opportunity to show their academic capabilities, learn, and grow with the support of their classmates and teachers. By passing a bill forcing schools to further exclude transgender students, you rob so many students in Ohio of feeling like they have a place in the classroom, just like me. This bill serves no functional purpose, as no transgender athlete holds a state record, and school athletics aren't about money or awards- they are about teamwork, leadership skills, building friendships, setting goals, hard work, and dedication. It disproportionately attacks trans girls, glossing greatly over transgender boys, showing a clear bias in concern. Regardless of intent, this will harm already vulnerable students, statistics showing that trans students experience increased amounts of bullying, sexual violence, threats, and suicidal thoughts. Truly protecting students fundamental safety should be a priority well before a hypothetical issue of athletics with no citable situation of unfairness.

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