

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Education Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jessica Kirsner and my pronouns are she/her/hers. I am a nonprofit fundraising professional, I have a biology degree, and I guarantee that I am the biggest sports fan you know. I am strongly opposed to House Bill 161/Senate Bill 132, banning transgender athletes from participating in sports.

Sports have been part of my life for as long as I can remember. I started going to baseball games with my dad when I was very young, and grew up playing team sports in and out of school. I was even lucky enough to go to the first ever WNBA Championship game as a 7-year-old in 1997.

Watching the WNBA was the first time I ever felt like I could do anything. Here are these incredible athletes - who just happen to be women - getting paid to play sports. Just like men do! Seeing them play, watching them hoop, knowing they had an opportunity to make this their living: it was incredible.

But, for me and for most children who play sports, we know we aren't going to be professional athletes. For us, sports are about community and friendship. Team sports are where I learned how to accomplish something bigger than myself. I learned how to work with people I didn't like or get along with. Sports taught me how important it is to band together towards a common goal. And they instilled a lifelong joy, a fellowship I can share with other sports fans. No matter where I am, I can find someone to talk with about sports: it is a universal language.

And y'all are right, there is a crisis in women's sports right now. But it isn't what you think. Right now, less than 1% of sports media money, and less than 10% of sports media coverage, are dedicated towards women's sports. Women's leagues get less air time and less sponsorship dollars even when they are more successful and more profitable than their male counterparts: just look at the US Women's National Soccer team! In fact, I'd like to ask each and every one of you on this committee when the last time you went to a women's sporting event was, since you seem so concerned with upholding their integrity.

Girls' sports are also struggling too. By age 14, girls drop out of sports at over two times the rate of boys. Girls have less access to sports than boys do, despite fifty years of Title IX. As girls grow up, they

see more and more that their facilities are worse than the boys. They see they have fewer coaches with less experience than the boys do. Their equipment - even their uniforms - often aren't as well funded as the boys. We see these disparities even at the highest levels of competition: we all remember the 2021 NCAA Tournament fiasco, right? Y'all were watching the Women's NCAA Basketball Tournament?

Despite all of these hurdles: less funding, worse instruction, less support and prestige: trans girls still want to play sports with other girls. Why would anyone go through the social stigma, the bullying, the targeted harassment from their legislature in the forms of bills like this one, just so they could have a worse experience? Just so they could have less prestigious opportunities? Just so they could make less money?

HB 151 won't make girls' sports safer. Every time a sporting body tries to police gender they wind up cutting cis women out. We have seen this at the highest levels of competition, where women who have always been women – who were raised as women – have been disallowed from international competition.

The truth is that gender doesn't fit into neat little boxes like we want it to: sex isn't even as binary as we'd like to think. About 1-2% of the US - that is over 3 million people - are born with an intersex condition. Are these children going to be denied access to sports as well?

Sports are for everyone. Girls who participate in sports are 20% less likely to get breast cancer later in life. They communicate better with their parents, strengthening their families, and they have higher self-confidence.

No one should be denied these opportunities because of who they are or how they identify.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote **NO** on this disgraceful, disgusting bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

[IF TESTIFYING IN PERSON] I will now take any questions you may have.