

Ohio House Higher Education Committee
House Bill 6, "Save Women's Sports Act"
Opponent Testimony
Rev. Andrew Burns
April 16, 2023

My name is Rev. Andrew Burns (he/him). I am an ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church. The church I serve as Associate Pastor has several transgender people who are beloved, contributing members. As one of their pastors, I am very concerned about their well-being in the current political climate.

House Bill 6, the so-called "Save Women's Sports Act," is one manifestation of the climate of animosity toward transgender people. Despite its name, this bill will not save or protect anyone; this bill would only prohibit transgender students from playing the sport they want to play, while communicating "We do not believe you are who you say you are."

I have yet to hear a representative or senator explain why the issue of transgender students' participation in sports is a necessary use of the legislature's time, energy, and taxpayer money. Transgender students make up an infinitesimally small percentage of high school and collegiate athletes in Ohio. The NCAA and OHSAA already have policies in place to guide trans students' participation in gendered sports teams. Those two facts together suggest to me that this bill is unnecessary.

That makes me question the real motivation of Rep. Powell for sponsoring this bill, and that of the various co-sponsors. Is their motivation truly to protect women's fair participation in sports? While perhaps admirable, there are already guidelines in place from the appropriate governing bodies to do exactly that. I fear that the real motivation behind this bill is to score political points and gain power, rather than the wellbeing of Ohio's student-athletes.

This bill sends the message that we do not want trans people in our society, when trans people are just people like me or you or anyone reading this. Our trans siblings are already losing hope. As a pastor of trans people, I fear this will only worsen the mental health crisis and suicide rate in the trans community. I fear that people will die. As a clergy person, I will be one of the people cleaning up the mess left behind harmful policy, and I don't want to do those funerals. I will, because that is my job and my sacred calling, and these are the people Jesus calls me to minister to and with. But to think that I would have to preside over those funerals because a representative needed to rack up a few more points with a useless bill that just contributes to a culture of animosity – that makes me more sad and frustrated than I care to admit.

Please vote down House Bill 6 or let it die in committee.

Rev. Andrew Burns
King Avenue United Methodist Church
299 King Avenue, Columbus, OH 43201
513-330-4256