

Distinguished members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Silver Flight and I am a student at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. I am testifying to **oppose HB 6**.

This bill does not protect women and girls' ability to participate in sports. It targets an extremely small number of transgender girls in Ohio and tells them not only are they are not welcome in sports, but the government is going to make it *illegal* for them to play on sports teams with their friends.

Sports are incredibly important for children to make friends and be a part of a community.

Not being able to join a sports team can also lead to social exclusion and bullying—an experience I had in grade school when I was briefly the only girl who wasn't on the volleyball team. When transgender girls are not allowed to join girls' sports teams, they will face even more discrimination and isolation. And discrimination is a big problem. In 2022, 71% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported that they had been discriminated against based on their gender identity.¹

Transgender youth are following the news, and the anti-transgender bills that the government is trying to pass are having a direct impact on their mental health. In 2022, over 90% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported being worried about anti-transgender legislation, and **83% specifically said they were worried about being denied the ability to play sports due to their gender.**² It is essential that schools allow transgender youth to play on sports teams that match their gender identity. Although 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide in 2022, LGBTQ youth who found their school to be affirming reported lower rates of attempting suicide.³

Transgender women and girls do not currently have an advantage over cisgender women and girls in school sports. Prior to puberty, "there are no measurable athletic differences between boys and girls."⁴ Transgender women who do not go through a male puberty prior to beginning hormone replacement therapy also will not have an athletic advantage over cisgender women. The NCAA already has rules in place for trans athletes in both high school and college sports, which have been effective in ensuring fairness for athletes.

¹ 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, THE TREVOR PROJECT, <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/> (last visited Apr 16, 2023).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Joshua D Safer, *Fairness for Transgender People in Sport*, 6 JOURNAL OF THE ENDOCRINE SOCIETY bvac035, 1 (2022).

Even in the study cited by proponents of trans athlete bans, who claim that transgender women who transition after puberty retain an athletic advantage even a year or more after beginning hormone replacement therapy, the author of the study has emphasized that **his research does not apply to recreational or youth athletics**, which are very different from the Olympics.⁵

Therefore, there is *no reason* for Ohio to pass a bill that will exclude all transgender women and girls from school sports teams of their gender, regardless of whether they have gone through puberty or hormone replacement therapy. All this bill will do is further exacerbate discrimination against transgender youth in schools. Therefore, I ask you *not* to pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Silver Flight

⁵ *Trans Women Retain Athletic Edge After a Year of Hormone Therapy, Study Finds*, NBC NEWS (2021), <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/trans-women-retain-athletic-edge-after-year-hormone-therapy-study-n1252764>.