

Chair Young, and members of the Committee thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Mikael McLaren, I use he/him pronouns, and I am the father of a transgender daughter, a senior, who has participated in middle school and high school sports. I am writing here as an opponent to HB 6 that bans transgender girls from playing on girls' sports teams.

This is not my first-time writing, or testifying regarding this bill, or those similar. You have heard from parents, athletes, medical personnel, but here we are again. Perhaps the words of the Republican Governor of Utah, who vetoed a similar bill will have some impact.

“The transgender sports participation issue is one of the most divisive of our time. Because there are logical and passionate arguments by many parties, finding compromise or common ground can be difficult. Sadly, there is very little room for nuance in this debate...

I also believe there is broad misunderstanding around the current rules regarding transgender participation in sports. In particular, from the testimony of many, there seems to be a belief that any biologically born male could simply say he was transgender and begin participating in women's sports. This is incorrect. For many years now, the UHSAA (In Ohio, it is the Ohio High School Athletic Association) has had in place a rule that only allows male-to-female transgender participation in women's sports after a full year of difficult transition hormone therapy and in consultation with a health care professional. This has likely prevented some participation and helped to even the playing field. As a representative of the UHSAA stated: “As we read the science right now, we like our policy. This year we have four (Ohio has 7!) students who have gone through our paperwork, and we have not had any complaints from any other students or families or school administrators.” I should note that while I have some reservations about a policy that requires or incentivizes these transitions, it is the policy in place...

When in doubt, however, I always try to err on the side of kindness, mercy and compassion. I also try to get proximate, and I am learning so much from our transgender community. They are great kids who face enormous struggles...

Four (7) kids and only one (7) of them playing girls sports. That's what all of this is about. Four (7) kids who aren't dominating or winning trophies or taking scholarships. Four (7) kids who are just trying to find some friends and feel like they are a part of something. Four (7) kids trying to get through each day. Rarely has so much fear and anger been directed at so few. I don't understand what they are going through or why they feel the way they do. But I want them to live. And all the research shows that even a little acceptance and connection can reduce suicidality significantly. For that reason, as much as any other, I have taken this action in the hope that we can continue to work together and find a better way. If a veto override occurs, I hope we can work to find ways to show these four (7) kids that we love them, and they have a place in our state.

I recognize the political realities of my decision. Politically, it would be much easier and better for me to simply sign the bill. I have always tried to do what I feel is the right thing regardless of the consequences. Sometimes I don't get it right, and I do not fault those who disagree with me. But even if you disagree with me, I hope this letter helps you understand the reasons for my decision.

Sincerely,

Spencer J. Cox”

He understands. He gets it. You seem so desperate to find a problem, because you think you have a solution.

Transgender kids want the opportunity to play sports for the same reason other kids do: to be part of team where they can feel like they belong. We can't in good conscious discriminate against them and ban them from playing simply because they are transgender.

This is an age where freedoms are fragile. We see those in power speak loudly, and ceaselessly about compassion, but they rarely exhibit any. Be compassionate. Do not support House Bill 6.