

## Testimony of Melissa McLaren in Opposition to HB6

To Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and the Higher Education committee. My name is Dr. Melissa McLaren. I am a long-time resident of Ohio and the mother of twins who are high school seniors. I am asking you to vote no on House Bill 6 because current policies under the Ohio High School Athletics Association (OHSAA) are already working well to ensure transgender students can fairly play sports with their cisgender peers.

One argument for this bill is that boys have a biological advantage over girls. I have 17-year-old identical twins. They are genetically identical. One child is a cisgender male, the other is a transgender female. They both ran cross-country in middle school and my daughter played field hockey in high school. During their middle-school cross-country season, my transgender daughter, who has been on puberty blockers since the start of puberty, had to be approved through the OHSAA to ensure she did not have a physical advantage over other girls.

In their cross-country meets, the boys and girls always started the race at the same time, running the course together with finishing times recorded electronically through a chip tied to their shoe. How did my genetically identical kids do? I'm probably the only mom in Ohio who can report back on this unofficial science experiment. My transgender daughter, the one on puberty blockers, finished in the middle to the back of the pack all season. She got better as the season went on, as most of the kids did.

How did my son do; the one who should have a biological advantage over all the girls? At his first meet, which hosted multiple schools, he finished last. He finished after all the boys and after every single girl. And it wasn't even close. His coach came out to the field to see if my son wanted to quit. I am proud to say that he said, "Yes, I want to quit" but also kept running until he finished. He stayed all season long. He did get much better, but all the kids improved so he always finished as one of the last 10 all season. Neither of my kids are strong performers athletically but they didn't participate to get a trophy. They ran because they liked being part of a team.

My daughter started field hockey in her freshman year. Conditioning started during a hot July when she was growing so fast, I could almost see her getting taller. Anyone who has played sports knows that the worst part of the season is conditioning when you are building your cardio and strength. That's also when deep friendships are formed through the bonds of shared misery and sweat. My daughter would come home sore, tired, and absolutely blissful about her new friends. She couldn't wait to go back.

About a month into it, she came home complaining of pain in her hip after running that day. We thought nothing of it, until she came home the next day with instructions to get it checked out before the next practice. We went to Children's Urgent Care where they told us she probably pulled a muscle and to take it easy for a few days. Her pain persisted until about a week later when she sat down and had a sudden onset of excruciating pain. She couldn't get up or move her leg without blinding agony. My husband and I had to carry her to the car where she white knuckled the drive back to Children's Urgent Care in a cold sweat. I'm not exaggerating when I tell you she almost passed out multiple times from pain when they got an x-ray of her hip.

There's a type of hip injury that only occurs in teenagers who are going through a growth spurt. When she was running during practice, she planted her foot to pivot, and the head of her femur slipped out of

the cup of her pelvis. When she sat down a week later, it slipped out a lot resulting in a very painful fracture of her growth plate. When the doctor came in to tell us that she would require immediate surgery, the first question out of Conner's mouth was, "Can I still play field hockey?" She began sobbing when the doctor told her she was out for the season. She didn't cry when her hip fractured, she didn't even cry on the agonizing trip to Urgent Care. But she sobbed most of the way from Canal Winchester to Children's Hospital in Columbus because she wouldn't get to play with her friends. She had a lengthy recovery but did go on to play field hockey with her friends in subsequent seasons.

You have the power to ensure that girls like my daughter aren't left sobbing because they can't play with their friends. Any man who has been beat by a woman in co-ed sports knows that having XY chromosomes does not always mean faster, stronger, or better. We know from our own personal experiences that athletic ability varies quite a bit within the same gender. Thankfully, we have experts in the field, such as the OHSAA, who have developed policies to ensure fairness on single-gender sports teams so that trans athletes, like my daughter, can still play with their friends.

Last spring, my family ran a 5K as a fundraiser. My son trained hard because he and his sister competed over everything, and he didn't want to come in last. She has remained on puberty blockers and added cross-gender hormones at the appropriate time. When our family had completed the 5K, my husband came in first, my son second, I came in third, and my daughter was last. This process is working in Ohio and HB 6 with its blanket ban is unnecessary and frankly, cruel. Please do not pass HB6. I welcome the opportunity to answer your questions.