

Chairman Young, ranking member Miller and members of the committee, my name is Pastor Julianne Smeck and I am here to testify in opposition to HB 6.

I speak against HB6 because it is an attempt to solve a problem that isn't a problem. In other words, it creates a problem.

I am terrified by the scapegoating of people who are transgender. This bill will only intensify threats upon trans youth. Can you imagine the invasive trauma inflicted upon trans youth if this were to become law? The bill is called Save Women's Sports. It will not. There are only six transgender women presently participating in sports in the entire state of Ohio. Women's sports don't need saving from this "threat". It is not a threat.

The true effect of this bill will be to endanger transgender youth and adults. Simultaneously, it will serve to distract from real issues which do need attention from this elected body. We desperately need solutions to problems like violence, or the problem of poverty, or the increasing rate of suicide. These do threaten women. And, they threaten men, and youth, and children, and yes, these issues threaten people of every age who are trans. These issues threaten all people.

I speak against this as a faith leader. We believe God created all people. All are made in the image of God. But, the image of God is not fully visible in one person. The image of God is not fully seen in one ethnicity. No single category of human "being" reflects the image of God. We are all image bearers. Only together, in our full diversity, can the image of God be glimpsed.

Many (though certainly not all) people have come to recognize the image of God that is visible in racial diversity. Some have recognized that the image of God is visible in people who are disabled. Some have recognized the image of God in those who are gay or lesbian. But for many, that seems to be the end. The line seems to be drawn at the transgender person.

But the truth remains that the image of God is seen in all people. God delights in the many real differences between people. God created them. In fact, it is in those very differences that we can glimpse the image of God.

Therefore, people who are transgender are not threats. They are threatened. They are real. They are not deficient. They are people.

Women do not need protection from them. The transgender community is the one that needs protection. I urge you to vote no on this bill. Stop this bill, so that vulnerable people will not be put in greater jeopardy. Vote no on this bill so you can give your attention to the real issues that truly threaten all of us. Thank you.

Rev. Julianne R. Smeck
Hope Lutheran Church

820 Lilley Avenue

Columbus, Ohio. 43209