

Dear, the senate body of Ohio,

A vital piece of American education is the extracurricular opportunities provided through school districts and resultant, the state. Extracurriculars are a conducive element of a child's educational career, creating a space outside of school work that provides an outlet for students of all kinds. As a young transgender woman, I think back on my own experiences in my high school's marching band as a key formative tool, helping shape my own views and habits. It made me a better student and a better team player. Without having an accepting and structured environment my mental health and overall educational journey would have been jeopardized. Studies show a disproportionate amount of transgender individuals have an increased burden with mental health struggles, particularly for trans youth (Tordoff, Wanta, Collin 2). Cutting access to structured and accepting environments will have a detrimental effect on transgender individuals, and only compound on increased mental health woes. Without the support of my bandmates I do firmly believe that I would not be alive today. Extracurriculars provide structure, routine and comfort for many young people who may lack these in their home life. Forcing individuals out of sports such as volleyball, softball, baseball, or constricting these young people to groups they have been forced into (ie. sex assigned at birth), will only hamper student development and worsen the American Mental Health Crisis. This bill violates many young transgender individuals' right to choose, to be involved in their community and build connections with their peers. Doing so will only alienate students further and cause more unnecessary distress and harm.

Thank you for your consideration.