

I'm going to start this off by disclosing and disclaiming that I don't have much stake in this fight. I'm not a registered voter in Ohio, and we don't have a transgender child. We are however, a military family stationed in Ohio with 2 kids on IEPs and thousands of dollars in legal fees under our belt fighting for services they're already entitled to by law.

So, when a friend shared information about [HB6](#), I got really stuck on these numbers, these numbers from a system already in place with standards and regulations and approvals needed BEFORE a transgender student can even participate in sports, numbers at the core of this uproar and hateful legislation. Of these numbers (attached), the daughter of my friend accounts for 1/3 of the HS approvals in the past few years. That's three out of nine applications. I'm having a really hard time reconciling that against how much effort is being put into this when you KNOW there are bigger, real problems at hand. This feels like an absolutely shameful political play and I'm angry and disappointed.

OHSAA TRANSGENDER RULINGS 2015-2023

SCHOOL YEAR	FTM - HS		FTM- 7-8th		MTF - HS		MTF - 7-8th		Total Rulings
	Approvals	Denials	Approvals	Denials	Approvals	Denials	Approvals	Denials	
2015-16	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
2016-17	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
2017-18	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	9
2018-19	6	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	9
2019-20	5	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	10
2020-21	2	0	2	0	2	1	3	0	10
2021-22**	3	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	9
2022-23	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
TOTAL RULINGS:	30	0	8	0	10	1	13	1	63

As of 1/27/23

- Each transgender student is only approved on a seasonal or annual basis. Therefore, multiple rulings could be given for the same student.

-Though there have been 23 transgender females rulings, there have only been 16 transgender females athletes who have participated.

**2021-22 Updated policy to clarify when rulings are needed (reduced transgender male rulings)

According to the most recent [enrollment data](#) from the ODE, there are over 1.7 million students served by Ohio's public schools. Over 270K of those are recognized as students with disabilities (not including those who have yet to be identified) accounting for about 15% of the student population (again, not including those not identified and therefore not getting any of the services they need to be successful).

High school students account for 574,483, meaning last year's rulings account for roughly <0.00007% of the HS population for BOTH male and female students.

My question to you now is how many students took the Autism or Jon Peterson scholarships and left their school districts? Are you tracking what school districts have higher rates of scholarship payouts? Do you cross reference that against complaints? Do you know that a parent cannot take a scholarship while they have an outstanding complaint against the district? So if, for example, I were to file a complaint against a school district for say, unlawful use of restraint and seclusion, I would have to cancel/rescind that to be eligible for the scholarship, and the school would have absolutely no repercussions, follow up or even mandated training to ensure it doesn't happen again. But before we even get there, do you have any idea how long any of these processes take? And what do you think happens to these kids in the meantime? What happens to a child who loses an entire year of FAPE if their parents choose to fight for it? Or if they don't have the additional resources needed to make use of the scholarship - transportation from the district to a school equipped to serve your children, that also takes the scholarship, is not guaranteed. Then, if you take the scholarship because you disagree with the services outlined in the IEP, tough luck, the scholarship will only pay for services outlined in the IEP. If a parent chooses to fight, and go through these processes, what do you think all this time lost does for their long term success? How would you feel if you watched an entire year of education go to waste as you fight for a district to teach your child the way they learn, but they've never had to and aren't equipped to because somehow the status quo with any pushback has become "take the scholarship." And the wildest part is that I live in an incredible district with seriously AMAZING staff and teachers who love what they do, are good at what they do, and have the very best intent for our kids, but simply ARE NOT EQUIPPED OR SUPPORTED well enough to support all children BECAUSE so many people just take the scholarship and leave. This has effectively created a culture of segregation of students with disabilities from the general school population all across Ohio. The scholarships have been designed in a way that increases access for some, but limits and eliminates it for far more. Have you ever had to watch your child fall further and further behind their peers as you fought for the very things that could prevent that? That they're already entitled to?

And then how would you feel if you saw those numbers, and this effort, for something so alarmingly statistically insignificant. I'm angry.

Further to that, as a Surrogate Parent acting as "parent" in support of wards of the state in the IEP process, I've observed an alarming overuse, misuse and abuse of the designator "[ED - Emotional Disturbance](#)" for children who, more often than not, have other, more applicable diagnoses that then go unaddressed and unsupported in the IEP, creating more and more barriers to access as their real needs are ignored. What will you do about that? Have you ever pulled those numbers? These are wards of the state. I believe you have a higher level of responsibility for these children than any other group, but are you looking out for them? Are you actively reviewing numbers and statistics to ensure they are being properly served? My experience so far tells me no, and that leaves me finding this bill and the efforts behind it more and more disingenuous. That's disheartening.

When it comes to the entire school population, we have such a massive teacher shortage that the President of the Ohio Education Association called it "[catastrophic](#)." Fewer students are choosing teaching as a career - and why would they when they stand to make over 20% less on average than they would pursuing other degrees and certifications? How is your solution waiving teacher certification requirements in a state with alarming [failing literacy rates](#) and data proving we are not properly teaching kids to read? I'm thrilled to see Gov DeWine actively taking [strides](#) to tackle this, but the impact is so large and far reaching that this just scratches the surface and does not support the generations of students and Ohioans already at a literacy disadvantage. I'm disappointed.

I could never accurately portray how incredibly difficult it is to move every few years as a military family, so much more so if you have children with disabilities. The exceptional family programs are lacking, and Tricare is a complete joke when it comes to finding providers, then on top of that, every state has a different IEP process, requirements, and services offered. It's so, so, so hard to start over every time, there's ALWAYS, and I do mean ALWAYS a gap in service, that too often for too many of us has catastrophic and long term repercussions that stand to impact quality of life and the level of dependency and support these kids will need

throughout their lives - which realistically then stands to become another taxpayer burden that could have, in too many cases, been avoided in the first place. What are you doing? Of all the places we've lived, we had the most difficult time getting the right services in public school in Ohio. It's extremely disheartening to see so much time and energy spent on this bill when there are so many bigger issues that need to be tackled and addressed. I'm extremely disappointed that this is the fight you're choosing to fight. I expect you to act in the best interests of our children. This is not that, and you know it. I'm frustrated.

I'm opposed to HB6 because you have not demonstrated in any real way that this is an actual problem. Ohio already has a strict and stringent set of regulations and rules in place governing how this works, but a quick google search or simply having your offices pull numbers will quickly and easily demonstrate where your energy could and should be better spent if you want to improve schools, including sports programming, for our children.

I urge you to stop this unnecessary fight and focus your time and energy in fiscally and morally responsible ways that improve and enhance access within the public school system for ALL students. This is an entirely political play and the numbers clearly prove that. Our children NEED your support. We NEED you to do the job you were elected to do. This is not that. I think you can do better, but it's really up to you what you choose to do with your power. Just know that we are paying attention, and right now, we're not impressed.

Do the right thing.

Respectfully,
Christina Lopez
Geauga County