

Ohio Chapter

INCORPORATED IN OHIO

American Academy of Pediatrics

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April 19, 2023

Testimony of Delia M. Sosa, MS, MD Candidate House Bill 6

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to House Bill 6. My name is Delia Sosa and I am a medical student in Ohio, and I am here today on behalf of the 2,900 members of the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

I am speaking today not just as a medical student in our state and representative of the largest body of pediatricians in Ohio, but as someone who a bill such as House Bill 6 would have negatively impacted had it been proposed during my own childhood. I was a competitive athlete throughout my childhood, specifically a competitive swimmer, on both co-ed and single sex teams. In every year of my time as a swimmer, I was a closeted transgender kid.

In Ohio, there is a very small number of transgender children and adolescents who have received approval from The Ohio High School Athletic Association to participate on sports teams which align with their gender identity. These youth have been welcomed onto their respective teams and created friendships and meaningful experiences with their peers. Many trans youth do not have this opportunity or such a space to find a sense of community. I didn't. Instead of fully enjoying the time I spent with my teammates, every minute was spent feeling uncomfortable and unsafe. All I could feel was shame towards my body, a plummeting sense of self-worth, and a knowledge that no matter how hard I forced myself to look like my teammates and fade into the background, I could not force myself to feel safe in my own body.

While there can be physical differences between teenage males and average teenage females, this is not always the case. Both males and females have testosterone in their bodies, and no two people's testosterone levels are exactly the same. Each person's anatomy and physiology is different and, in alignment with current OSHAA standards, is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Swimmer Missy Franklin, a woman who is not transgender, had size 13 feet and was 5 foot 11 by age fifteen. How would it be fair for her to participate, but not a transgender girl with the same levels of testosterone who is 5 foot 6 and size 9 feet? None of the transgender students approved to participate in sports with teammates of the same gender identity have won medals or scholarships for their participation on said teams, nor have they taken opportunities away from their peers. But this bill would take opportunities away from them: the opportunity to thrive, to find a sense of belonging, to develop a baseline sense of self-worth before adulthood. Why not give all of Ohio's kids a chance to thrive when, thus far, OSHAA's guidelines have protected the integrity of youth sports while harming zero children in our state? Is the separation and

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othering of Ohio's transgender children worth the destruction of their support systems and their sense of self-worth? The title of this bill is the "Save Women's Sports Act." Why are we prioritizing the protection of an activity, which is already protected by OSHA regulations, over the protection of the constituents of this state? Who will prioritize them?

I grew up in a state where I was told time and time again that transgender people like me did not belong. I was told by leaders in my community that people like me were evil, demonic, terrible people. They said these things to a child. I have not moved back to my hometown or my home state as a result, and to be frank, I don't believe I ever will. I promise you that if Ohio's legislators, in the leadership roles you hold, vote in favor of House Bill 6, the transgender children you harm will not return to this state. We, as a state, will lose invaluable members of our communities. As a medical student, I have already taken an oath to protect the well-being of my patients and their communities. And as a future physician, it is my duty to act with empathy. I hope you too can place yourselves in our shoes and experience the empathy I feel for my patients every day. Voting for this bill is a profound message to Ohio's transgender children that they do not matter to our state. Please, do not do to these children what my home state did to me. Give them the chance to belong with their teammates, and show them that they belong in the State of Ohio.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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