



Public Health Graduate Student Association
The Ohio State University College of Public Health
House Bill 6
Ohio House Higher Education Committee

Chair Young, Vice Chair Miller, and members of the Higher Education Committee, thank you for reviewing our testimony regarding House Bill 6. My name is Natalie Zaborski, and I am here representing the Ohio State University Public Health Graduate Student Association’s interest and opposition to House Bill 6, which aims to require transgender athletes competing at the high school and collegiate levels to play on teams aligned with their biological sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity. Legal enactment of HB 6 raises the potential for discriminatory practices that would further exacerbate existing mental health disparities, increasing the risk of unhealthy behaviors and their associated negative health outcomes amongst transgender individuals. We would like to provide you with a summary of the existing research regarding the topic, and why we believe HB 6 will cause health harms to our transgender community.

The State of Ohio is experiencing a mental health crisis among adolescents and young adults.

- Nearly 14% of children in our Ohio schools have experienced a major depressive episode in the last year [1].
- Rates of suicide among Ohioans 18-24 years old increased in 2020, likely related to the COVID-19 pandemic [2, 3].



Mental health concerns are disproportionately affecting the transgender community.

- Transgender individuals report higher rates of mental health disorders (anxiety and depression) than their cis-gendered peers [4].
- Among LGBTQ+ adolescents, perceived discrimination, as demonstrated in HB 6, is closely associated with an increased risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation [5].



- Transgender sports bans are a societal level form of discrimination, and have been shown to harm both those directly affected by the legislation, and those who identify with the sexual and gender minority (SGM) group but who do not participate in athletics [6].

There is additional concern about the secondary harmful health behaviors that individuals affected by HB 6 may participate in.

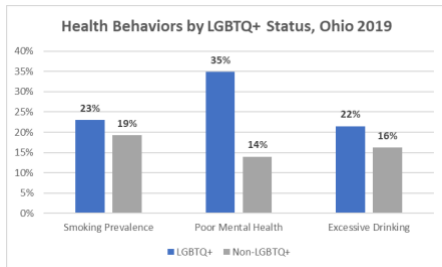
- Multiple forms of trauma (including bullying, harassment, rejection, and stress), are experienced more often among LGBTQ+ youth than their cis-peers [7, 8].
- When these adverse events are experienced in childhood, they can prompt an individual to engage in unhealthy coping behaviors including illicit drug use, problematic alcohol



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use, sexual risk taking, and interpersonal or self-violence, all of which can affect individuals for a lifetime [9].

- Among the LGBTQ+ population in Ohio, we already observe a higher prevalence of smoking and binge drinking behaviors than the cis-gendered population [3].



If HB 6 legislation passes, there is concern that these behaviors, and their subsequent negative health outcomes, will rise among the transgender population and perpetuate health disparities. The negative effect on health is not limited only to the direct effects of exclusion from playing sports, but expands to longer-term population-based health outcomes.

HB 6 could cause additional harm to the transgender youth and young adults in our community by perpetuating discriminatory attitudes and policies. If passed, this legislation sends a clear message to our community that transgender individuals do not afford the same rights and privileges as other members of our community, and that their health status does not warrant protection.

To promote the mental health and civils rights of not only transgender youth and young adults but all Ohaionas, the following government actions can be taken:

- Vote No on HB 6 to protect transgender individuals health and wellbeing.
- Allocate funding to increase school-based mental health services to meet the recommended ratio of students to counselors, psychologists, and social workers [10].

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Natalie Zaborski

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