

THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF HOUSE BILL 6

Testimony by Campaign for Our Shared Future

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee:

The Campaign for our Shared Future (COSF) is committed to stopping dangerous policies that single out some students for differential treatment, which is why we again strongly urge you to oppose House Bill (HB) 6.

We can all agree that no one should play political games with young people's lives, which is why governors on both sides of the isle have rejected bills like HB 6. Governors in Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, and Louisiana alike have vetoed legislation banning transgender athletes from competing in girls' sports, pushing back against the fake narrative that transgender children should be scapegoated and alienated.

In explaining his veto, Republican Governor Spenser Cox emphasized that this issue should be treated with nuance and empathy. "I don't understand what [transgender students] are going through or why they feel the way they do," he explained in a note. "When in doubt however, I always try to err on the side of kindness, mercy, and compassion."ⁱ We urge you to follow his lead and make a compassionate decision that considers ALL the potential damaging consequences of HB 6.

HB 6 Diverts Resources Away from Children

This proposal threatens to embroil schools in expensive litigation, diverting resources away from our children. Lawsuits against schools, school districts, colleges, and athletics organizations could result in less resources for our kids to learn and play sports. Our education tax dollars should go to children, not lawyers.

HB 6 is a Slippery Slope

The Ohio High School Athletic Association and the NCAA have policies governing student athletics to ensure fair access for every student. Yet, politicians want to dictate whose child gets to play sports, setting up a slippery slope. If politicians start telling families there is only one way to live their lives, where does it stop? Which group of children gets excluded next? Faraway statehouse politicians should not make blanket decisions on family values.

HB 6 Amounts to Bullying

All families want young people to be treated equally. Sports help all young people develop leadership, confidence, and community. Denying young people this opportunity is discriminatory—and it is bullying. U.S. Department of Education has clarified that the Title IX protects LGBTQ+ students' equal access to educational programs and activities.ⁱⁱ

HB 6 is an Attack on Mental Health

Many Ohio student athletes have already testified about the negative impact HB 6 would have on them, their teams, and their schools, but this proposal is likely already having a damaging impact on their mental health. A study by researchers at Cornell University found that the mere consideration of discriminatory legislation by politicians creates an unwelcoming climate for LGBTQ+ people by furthering poor mental health, internalized stigma, and expectations for adverse treatment.ⁱⁱⁱ

Transgender students already face bullying in schools, with 80% of students perceived as transgender reporting some form of mistreatment and 20% of young people facing severe mistreatment being forced to leave school.^{iv} That is devastating for a student individually, as well as for their future as an Ohioan. If they recover from this mistreatment, will they stay in Ohio? Or will they leave the state and take their talents elsewhere?

HB 6 is a Solution Looking for a Problem

The exceedingly small number of transgender young people who are looking to find a sense of connection and community—do not pose any threat to women’s sports. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated in 2019 that just 1.8 percent of high school students in the country are transgender,^v and the Human Rights Campaign estimates that only about 12% play on girls’ sports teams.^{vi} How many transgender students play girls’ sports in Ohio?

Like all young people, transgender students deserve opportunities in and out of school that are free from discrimination and prepare them for their futures. When young people are healthy and able to pursue their goals—regardless of gender—it creates a better future for all Ohioans.

ⁱ “Utah Governor Vetoes Transgender-Athlete Bill,” *New York Times*, March 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/us/utah-governor-transgender-athlete-ban.html>

ⁱⁱ “U.S. Department of Education Confirms Title IX Protects Students from Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity,” U.S. Department of Education, June 2021, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-confirms-title-ix-protects-students-discrimination-based-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity>.

ⁱⁱⁱ 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS), National Center for Transgender Equality, [https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTSOHStateReport\(1017\).pdf..](https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTSOHStateReport(1017).pdf..)

^{iv} The Trevor Project Research Brief: Bullying and Suicide Risk among LGBTQ Youth, October 2021, <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/The-Trevor-Project-Bullying-Research-Brief-October-2021.pdf>.

^v “Transgender Identity and Experiences of Violence Victimization, Substance Use, Suicide Risk, and Sexual Risk Behaviors Among High School Students — 19 States and Large Urban School Districts,” Center for Disease Control, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6803a3.htm>

^{vi} Improving the lives of LGBTQ Youth in Sports, Human Rights Campaign Foundation, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/PlayToWin-FINAL.pdf>