

Chairman Young, Representative Powell, and members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Kelly Erin Risher. My pronouns are she and her, and I am 43 years old.

I attended Otterbein College. I have a storied career in banking and wealth management. I am a single mother and caregiver to an aging parent. I am a professional musician, a self published author, and a woman of transgender experience.

I am also an activist. Within the past year, I helped organize two peaceful demonstrations in Cincinnati. I volunteer for the Butler County Suicide Prevention Program's Envision LGBTQ+ youth space.

I began identifying as a woman two years ago, but I was assigned male at birth. I'd like to talk about my experiences as a young woman who was forced by society to live as a little boy.

I was raised in Pickerington, Ohio, where little boys were expected to compete in youth sports. I tried soccer, baseball, and basketball. I didn't yet understand my gender dysphoria and therefore it was a terrifying experience.

Instead, I very quietly dreamt of learning ballet. I would watch the Winter Olympics and dream of being a figure skater. I never spoke about these things, and to this day, I live with the deep remorse of never having the chance to do these activities.

I didn't fit in with my classmates. I was bullied and socially isolated. The experience put me in danger. That danger became a reality when a male classmate raped me three times; once in the third grade, and then again two more times in the sixth grade. He saw an easy target; because I was.

It wasn't until I joined the co-ed Marching Band that I began to flourish. Those of you familiar with the Pickerington Marching Tigers will know just how impressive and demanding that organization is. It was the best thing to happen to me as an adolescent. I began to experience friendships and finally felt social acceptance for the first time in my life. Were it not for the Marching Band, I may have acted on the very strong urges to end my own life.

Can we collectively imagine what my childhood would have been like, had I been allowed to do ballet? To become a figure skater? Play sports with the other girls? Maybe soccer wouldn't have been so terrifying had I been able to identify as the little girl I **was**, rather than the forced boy's world that petrified me and made me feel so terribly isolated?

Let me be clear; I believe there is value in fostering an athletics environment that is fair to all competitors. However, it is also clear to me that the sponsors of this bill are not interested in doing the due diligence of actual research into the effects of Hormone Replacement Therapy on

transgender athletes. To that end, I have included links to scientific research on the effects of hormone replacement therapy amongst transgender athletes, both male and female, in my written testimony. I would encourage you to read the data, even though I suspect many of you simply don't give a damn.

I am not a medical professional or a biologist and therefore, this may take some of you by surprise, but with my remaining time, I'd like to talk about genocide.

Dr. Gregory H. Stanton classified the ten stages of genocide as such, in order:

Classification. Symbolization. Discrimination. Dehumanization. Organization. Polarization. Preparation. Persecution. Extermination, and finally, Denial.

Bills like House Bill 6, and its sister in crime, House Bill 68, are direct examples of stages three and four; Discrimination and Dehumanization. By 'othering' these children and removing their rights to exist in the way that is best for them, you are removing their freedoms that are supposedly guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

You are increasing the risk of suicidal ideation and attempts. You are actively trying to harm children.

Other states have enacted more severe anti-trans laws, targeting not only children, but adults and parents. States like Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Florida and Texas, have jumped right ahead to stages seven and eight; Preparation and Persecution. That's one stage before Extermination, and I would hope that I don't need to explain that one to you. From the Holocaust to the genocide in Rwanda, history shows us where these sorts of actions lead, and it is chilling.

Do you really want to throw our great state of Ohio in with the likes of these other places? We ask people to "Find it Here" in Ohio. Do we want people finding this?

Transgender adults are scared. Transgender children and their parents are terrified. We fear that your unjust and unethical laws will rip our families apart, displace us, expose us to hate crimes, or land us in jail. In a country where we are supposed to have freedom, I can think of nothing more hypocritical, and frankly, nothing more evil.

Thank you.

References:

1. **The Ten Stages of Genocide** - published by Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
<https://www.hmd.org.uk/learn-about-the-holocaust-and-genocides/what-is-genocide/the-ten-stages-of-genocide/>
2. **Critics Accuse Trans Swimming Star Lia Thomas of having an unfair advantage** - published by Independent UK

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/lia-thomas-trans-swimmer-ron-des-antis-b2091218.html>

3. **Race Times for Transgender Athletes** - Written by Joanna Harper, published by Common Ground Research Networks, ISSN 2381-6694 (Online)
<https://cgscholar.com/bookstore/works/race-times-for-transgender-athletes>
4. **Suicide Risk Factors** - published by The Trevor Project
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/suicide-risk-factors/>