



December 5th, 2023

Submitted via email

Senate Government Oversight Committee

South Hearing Room
1 Capitol Sq, Columbus, OH 43215

Re: HB 68 (Click)

Dear Members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee,

GLSEN is the leading national organization on LGBTQI+ issues in K-12 education, working to ensure that all youth – including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, nonbinary, Two-Spirit, and intersex youth – have equal opportunities to thrive, grow, and reach their full potential. GLSEN works to build safe and affirming learning environments for LGBTQI+ youth while advancing racial, gender, and disability justice in education settings.

GLSEN opposes H.B. 68 and similar anti-LGBTQI+ legislation that infringes on the rights and livelihood of transgender youth. In an outrageous attack against our gender diverse youth, H.B. 68 aims to singlehandedly prohibit the participation of transgender students in sports and ban medically necessary gender-affirming care for youth, forcing families to leave the state to protect access to essential healthcare for their children.

Every student should have equal opportunity in education where they can thrive and reach their full potential. GLSEN's research has found that among LGBTQI+ students, sports participation is related to higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and greater school belonging.¹ Transgender (trans) and nonbinary students should have the same access to athletic participation as their classmates. GLSEN's National School Climate Survey (NSCS) of LGBTQI+ students found that nearly half (46.0%) of transgender secondary students, including those who identify as nonbinary, were prevented from playing on a school sports team consistent with gender identity.² More than one in four (27.7%) of nonbinary students reported the same. As state attacks on transgender students participation in sports increased between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of transgender and nonbinary students reporting that they had been barred from school sports more than doubled.

¹ Clark, C. M., & Kosciw, J. G. (2021). Engaged or excluded: LGBTQ youth's participation in school sports and their relationship to psychological well-being. *Psychology in the Schools*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22500>

² Joseph G. Kosciw, Caitlin M. Clark, Leesh Menard, *The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools*, (New York: GLSEN), pp. 91-93
<https://www.glsen.org/research/2021-national-school-climate-survey>



GLSEN research also shows that LGBTQI+ youth in Ohio are already facing hostile school environments and a lack of inclusive resources, and many trans and nonbinary students already face numerous barriers to participating in sports. Almost 2 in 3 LGBTQI+ students (62%) have experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination in Ohio schools, with transgender and nonbinary students in particular experiencing gender-based discrimination.³ Legislation such as H.B. 68 will only make it worse.

On student participation in sports, recent analysis of CDC data found that there was no negative impact on the participation of girls and women in school sports in states that had implemented trans-inclusive state athletics policies.⁴ In fact, early evidence from California and Connecticut suggests that trans-inclusive policies are correlated with *increased* participation of girls in school sports.⁵ In contrast, where states enacted trans-exclusionary policies, girls' overall participation in high school sports *declined*.⁶

Additionally, gender-affirming care is healthcare and it saves lives — every single major medical association in the U.S. supports gender-affirming care for youth, and removing access to this medically necessary care will have tragic consequences. Legislators should not be interfering in access to evidence-based science, especially affirming, professionally endorsed services by physicians, mental health professionals, and other licensed providers. This is a clear example of legislation in search of a problem that does not exist and represents state-sanctioned bullying against an already marginalized population.

On top of putting imperative healthcare resources at risk, HB 68 is extreme government overreach and state-sponsored bullying of trans and gender non-conforming Ohioans.

We call on the Ohio Senate to uphold the rights of LGBTQI+ youth by rejecting H.B. 68. Should you have any questions about the above information, please feel free to reach out to Rin Alajaji, State and Local Policy Manager, via email at rin.alajaji@glsen.org.

Sincerely,

Brian Dittmeier
Director of Public Policy
GLSEN

³ “Ohio State Research Snapshot” (2021)

https://maps.glsen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GLSEN_2021_NSCS_State_Snapshots_OH.pdf

⁴ Shoshana K. Goldberg, “Fair Play: The Importance of Sports Participation for Transgender Youth,” Center for American Progress (February 8, 2021), 14-16,

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/reports/2021/02/08/495502/fair-play> See GLSEN and TransAthlete.com, “Trans and Nonbinary Athletic Inclusion Policies” (updated December 2023),

<https://maps.glsen.org/trans-and-nonbinary-athletic-inclusion-policies/>

⁵ Goldberg, “Fair Play,” 14-16 (Feb. 8, 2021).

⁶ *Id.* at 14-15