

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 3-21-23

Name: KEVIN RITTER

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): _____

Position/Title: _____

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB6

Specific Issue: TRANS ATHLETES IN SPORTS - SAVE WOMEN'S SPORTS ACT

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5:30

Please provide a brief statement on your position: AS A FORMER COLLEGE ATHLETE, AND COLLEGE & HIGH SCHOOL COACH, I AM IN FAVOR OF THE LEGISLATION.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Save Women's Sports – Testimony (3-29-23)

(If it please the Chair.....)

Good morning to the members of the Committee and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Kevin Ritter. I am currently a Washington County Commissioner.

This is the second time I have come before the Committee to testify in support of this legislation. I appreciate the tenacity of those members who have refused to let this issue die.

When I was here 18 months ago, I told the Committee that I have experience as both a college athlete – I played four years of Division I Baseball at Central Michigan University – and as a college coach. I coached baseball at Case Western Reserve University and women's softball at Marietta College. Finally, I worked closely with high school age baseball and softball players for 25+ years as the President of a youth development organization called Coast to Coast Athletics.

When I was here last time, I chose to focus on the mental challenges to young women posed by the introduction of biological males into the competitive space. I told the Committee about the obvious change in bearing and manner that took place among the female athletes I coached when young male athletes came into the gym during practice.

I testified at that time that I believed – and I still believe – that the introduction of trans-athletes into women's sports will mean the end of meaningful women's sports.

I chose to focus on the mental strain placed on young women by the trans-athlete movement because I believed it was an important aspect that was only rarely considered. Others have or will likely testify about the unique physical challenges posed by introducing biological males into a formerly female-only space. Still others will talk about the issue

from a safety perspective, or a fairness perspective, and you will likely hear from those who speak issue from a strictly moral position.

After more than a year since I first testified, I am even more firmly convinced that young women in America are in a particularly vulnerable position today and they need your help.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recently released a new study focused on the dramatic increase the number of suicide attempts among teenage girls in the last couple years. The numbers are shocking. CDC reported that attempts by teenage girls are up over 50% between 2019 and 2021.

To put this in perspective, attempts by teenage boys during the same period are up just 4%. Of course there are a variety of factors that might explain this difference but what is inarguable is that sports have long been a healthy refuge for young women.

Since Title IX was signed into law by President Nixon in 1972, girls have at least had the hope of a level playing field. With the introduction of biological males into this space, that is no longer the case.

Because I had relatively short notice to put together today's testimony, I decided to go right to the source. I sent out an email to a number of the young women I have coached to get their perspective on this issue. Across the board, they were in favor of this legislation.

If you will indulge me, I'd like to share some of the things they had to say:

The first person I emailed said, "*Thank you for speaking for the many girls who would like to speak up but feel pressure not to.*" She went on by saying, "*I discussed the issue with my teenage daughter who is an athlete and she has serious safety concerns about competing with biological boys. She said, if presented with that choice, she would not to play.*"

A **second person** responded, *“I was always one of the smallest athletes in the sports I played. I would have been intimidated and afraid of injury. There’s no way I would have played.”*

A **third athlete** said, *“Allowing biological males to compete against women is a step back for women’s rights. It would lead to declining participation and frustration for those who did play.”*

Athlete #4 said, *“I doubt I would have pursued a college sports career if I had to play against biological males in high school. This would have changed the course of my life. I met my best friends - lifelong friends - and my husband through sports. I look at my own daughters and I want them to learn the lessons about life that I learned through sports.”*

Finally, this from **another young lady** I coached: *“There was a time in my life when all I had was sports. My parents divorced. I experimented with drugs and alcohol. And I made some bad decisions. The only thing I was proud of were my accomplishments in sports. I would not have had that success if I had to compete on an uneven playing field.....and I hate to think what would have happened to me.”*

Ladies and gentlemen of the Committee, I implore you to pass this legislation and preserve for the young women of our country one of the few spaces previously **unsullied by ideology** and **untainted by politics**.

Thank you.....