

Testimony from Brianne Brinker  
House Committee on Higher Education  
HB 6

Good morning Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and the rest of Ohio's House Committee on Higher Education. Thanks for this time to speak with you today. I am here to oppose HB 6

My name is Brianne Brinker, I am a trans woman and an Assistant Athletic Director for Facilities at Union College in Schenectady, NY. Before that, I coached women's ice hockey at the University of Findlay, and I am a dual degree Kent State University Alumna. I will take this time to walk you through the head, mind, and soul of a trans woman throughout her life, and describe the feelings that I had through some of the most pivotal moments in my life.

I was assigned male at birth and grew up in St. Louis Missouri. As a five-year-old, I quickly picked up on society's expectations of gender roles; I watched and learned from my dad who was a bricklayer and my stay-at-home mother. I saw how masculinity was valued and could imagine the consequences if I were to speak out and say that I wanted to be like my mom. I felt like I was alone - and that no one understood what I was going through. I also knew the place I felt safe, and was my own space, was under my bed. I would hide there and shut the world out.

Within my world, I could be who I wanted to be. The characters I made up for myself were not only that of men but also of women. I had an opportunity to see if being a man felt right, and it did not. As I grew older, I played a lot of sports, whatever the kids in the neighborhood or at school were playing. My free time, while I was by myself, was spent with me imagining I was making saves for the St. Louis Blues or throwing runners out at second base as the catcher for the St. Louis Cardinals. While I never became a professional hockey player, I was inducted into the Kent State Hall of fame and played at the highest levels of hockey.

As I grew older, at a daycamp between fourth and fifth grade, we were asked to draw a picture of ourselves as for what we would be when grown up. I saw myself as a pro hockey player, holding the Stanley Cup for the Blues on the cover of Sports Illustrated, but also saw myself in a swimsuit as the model on the SI swimsuit edition. I of course drew myself with the Cup over my head.

It was life changing to take the hormone pills.

I was able to feel like my real self, my authentic self.

Once I came out, I was on my way to happiness, self-acceptance, and improved mental health, yet still searching to find myself and the place I belonged. Just as a new kid in school, as some of you may have experienced, I was looking for more ways to fit in. Just like you, I was looking for a place to belong.

It was the hierarchy of Union College embracing me that made the real difference.

When the associate Athletic Director sent an email to invite all of the women athletic administrators to a conference for Women in Sports Administration, it absolutely melted my heart. To be considered part of the group of people I'd longed to be part of for so long, like the hormones, changed my life. I could not sign up for that conference fast enough. It meant absolutely everything to me to belong to this small and select group.

One thing to consider is that as a part of my journey, I began Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and quickly noticed that my muscle mass was going away, and I was nowhere near as strong as I used to be. I am not a threat to other women in sports.

My role on campus makes me very visible, and students often reach out to thank me for being visible and a role model for the LGBTQ+ community. Several parents have reached out to ask questions regarding their kids who

are showing signs of gender dysphoria, and several cis men have approached me to say that they have been dressing [presenting as women in private] for years and are not able to publicly present as a women, but by seeing me, they don't feel like they are the only one. They don't feel alone, or like a freak.

I ask that you reconsider this bill and allow all those who identify as women to participate in athletics.

There are more nuances we can talk about, and I would be happy to answer questions.