

To Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and the Higher Education committee: My name is Conner McLaren. I use she/her pronouns and I am a proud transgender girl who attends high school in Ohio. I have played middle school and high school sports. The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) has always required me to send in a letter from my doctor along with my actual lab values to ensure that I don't have an advantage over other girls. I'm on puberty blockers so I have less testosterone than cisgender girls. I am not a threat to girl's sports. Playing a sport in high school isn't just about winning, it's that feeling of belonging. By passing this bill you'll be depriving kids like me the opportunities to feel that sense of belonging when they need it most. Being in high school is hard. Kids can be mean, and society even meaner. Playing field hockey with my friends helped me feel included and accepted. I remember an instance when the team and I were doing castaways, an exercise consisting of running up a half mile long hill then running down, and it sucked, I was dead last the entire time. I felt like I was dying, my lungs and legs were burning with exhaustion. I just wanted to lie down and perish, but when the fastest people on the team started to pass me on the way down and they saw how much I looked like the living dead, they gave me the mental willpower to push. The burning in my legs didn't stop, but my team and I didn't stop either. As I kept getting closer and closer to the top, more and more of my teammates offered words of encouragement, and cheered me on, as I did to them, and when there was no one left, it was because I had made it to the top of the half mile hill. My team had pushed me up a hill I never thought I could climb. If I had not been able to join a sport, I would have never been able to experience what it feels like to be part of a team. I would have never been able to form the friendships that I still have today.

Without those connections, school would have been much harder for me. Feeling isolated and alone is a terrible feeling and with the regular stresses of school, it can be detrimental to teenagers like myself. I know that learning how to push myself physically with the help of my friends has also helped me learn how to push myself in other areas of my life. I would have never been able to focus with all the added stress and anxiety. I never would have gotten accepted into my dream college had I never played with my team and learned the lessons of persistence, resiliency, and overcoming obstacles. Trust me, testifying against bills like this one is yet another lesson in overcoming obstacles. Playing sports and learning to function with a team, making those connections, and learning how it feels to be part of a group that so genuinely supports you changed my life, and I can't imagine what I would do without it. Please do not pass House Bill 6. Thank you so much for your time today.