

Opponent Testimony for H.B. 6
House Higher Education Committee
April 17, 2023

Jessi Sadaka

Chairman Young, Representative Powell, and members of the Higher Education Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jessi Sadaka. I am a nonbinary transgender adult living in Ohio House District 7. The purpose of my testimony is to oppose H.B. 6.

H.B. 6 would require schools, state higher education institutions, and private colleges in Ohio to establish separate athletic sports teams based upon sex.

I am deeply concerned about this legislation for the following reasons:

(1) The proposed legislation is not rooted in modern science. The sex binary is a drastic oversimplification of the biological variation found naturally among human individuals. The two sex categories, male and female, are based on grouping several factors including genitalia shape, chromosome combination, body fat and hair distributions, hormone levels, and more. In a practical sense, deciding who gets an “F” listed on their birth certificate as a baby and who gets an “M” listed there is a judgment call. What about intersex people – what sports team will welcome them? And when someone transitions (socially or medically), which sex are they considered to be, for purposes of this legislation? The terms “male sex” and “female sex” are not defined in the bill’s text.

(2) The proposed legislation does not include procedures for enforcement. When a given new athlete arrives to join a team, who will be responsible for confirming their sex? How will that be confirmed – a birth certificate, a genital exam, a doctor’s note? Will all athletes’ identities be checked, or only those who are perceived to be genderqueer, outliers for their sex, or otherwise “different” with regard to gender? A law that requires coaches and administrators to exclude athletes based upon sex will have the on-the-ground impact of exposing many athletes to unnecessary scrutiny, even ones the legislation claims to be protecting.

(3) The proposed legislation singles out transgender women for exclusion from sports. Section 1B of the proposed legislation prohibits “individuals of the male sex” from participating on teams designated for “the female sex” – this would mean that transgender women could not to participate in sports alongside peers of their same gender. There is no corresponding section that prohibits transgender men from playing on teams with cisgender men. The internal logic of this omission seems to be that women’s sports need to be protected from men, but to me that sounds like internalized sexism instead. Why is one sex protected but not the other?

(4) The proposed legislation targets transgender people for bullying, harassment, and social isolation, while simultaneously ignoring our existence. The words “transgender” and “transition” do not appear anywhere in the bill, even though Section 1B is designed specifically to bar transgender women from playing sports with their women peers.

Playing sports can have huge positive impacts on young people growing up – physically, emotionally, socially, and more. Learning good sportsmanship means being a team player, and it also means accepting that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. Transgender and cisgender athletes playing sports together isn’t hurting anybody. Excluding transgender athletes definitely harms them, and it teaches their peers to be discriminatory.

Please consider my testimony and vote NO on H.B. 6. Thank you.