

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Miller, and House Higher Education Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 6 that would ban transgender girls from playing sports.

Being a kid is hard. Being a teenager is harder. In fact, there is no amount of money you could pay me to go back in time and relive those years, and my childhood was certainly way less complicated than that of the kids growing up today. I don't know what it's like to be young, growing up in our society today, but I understand what growing up is about. It's a time when children learn about themselves and others. A time to practice what it means to be human. How to be a part of family and community. To make mistakes. To fix those mistakes. It's about learning how to be successful on your own and as part of a team. Childhood brings lessons that serve us for the rest of our lives.

Some of these lessons bring love, joy, and acceptance, and others bring sadness, rejection, and isolation. We have seen these lessons in books, cinema, and TV. Movies like *The Goonies*, *Heathers*, and *Mean Girls* have immortalized these years. No matter who you are, these stories and stories like them bring all the emotions we experienced growing up back to the surface for us. We either felt like those characters or knew someone who did.

As I already mentioned, these younger years were hard for me. One of the things that I am sure my parents were hoping would make it easier, or at least more fun, was participating in sports. After all, my father had a long career playing team sports and even got a large scholarship to Ohio University to play soccer. So it's no surprise that I ended up being enrolled on a co-ed soccer team when I was in elementary school. I was looking forward to it, but after the first day, I began to dread it. I was constantly being told by some of the boys on my team that "girls couldn't play soccer" because "we weren't good enough to play" and "you should just give up." I kept playing even though it was torture for me, and even though I loved the game, I eventually gave up. The bullying had that effect on me. This lesson that I learned didn't stay on the field, unfortunately. It was internalized. I began to question the ability of my gender and my worthiness as a person. Thankfully, I had adults in my life who helped me to see that as a girl, and eventually as a woman, I would do things just as well as, perhaps even better than, my male counterparts, that I was good enough and that I had the qualities it would take to succeed.

This bill before you is completely unnecessary. We already have the Ohio High School Athletic Association and the NCAA governing girls' and women's sports teams in Ohio. Both of these organizations have been successfully navigating the waters of gender non-conforming youth and young adults here in Ohio for several years. With all due respect, I do not believe that this bill will save women's sports. I think it will do the exact opposite. I think it will harm them. It will bully the girls who are already marginalized, and it will reinforce negative stereotypes and encourage bright, talented girls to flee the State of Ohio to go where they are welcomed.

Before you vote on this bill, I would ask you to think about the lesson you are teaching the youth of Ohio. Are you teaching them that they aren't good enough? That they should just give up? Or are you teaching them, like the adults in my life taught me, that they are good enough and that they can succeed?

I urge you to vote no on this bill. Thank you for your time.