



**Statement by Pam Boteler
President, WomenCAN International and former Team USA Athlete,
before the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
in opposition to House Bill 6**

Dear Chairman Brenner and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Pam Boteler and I am President of WomenCAN International, which has been a global voice for equity in Olympic Canoeing for two decades.¹ I am a life-long athlete having competed at nearly every level offered in sport, except for the Olympics, due to nearly a century of discrimination against women in Olympic Canoeing. Thank you for the opportunity to present my concerns about House Bill 6. I strongly oppose these bills.

I competed at the national and international level in Olympic style sprint canoe from 2000-2010 and as part of Team USA. For the first two years, I had to compete against men at the US nationals because there were no women's canoe events. And, I have spent over 17 years fighting for inclusion and equity for women in Olympic canoeing. Our dream came to fruition in the Tokyo Olympics.

As a woman and as an athlete, I've faced many challenges to equity in sport, but I assure you transgender women and girls are not amongst those challenges. Transgender women and girls play sports for the same reason we all do: to be a part of a team, to connect with their peers, learn new skills, push personal mental and physical boundaries, and to learn values like fair play, teamwork, discipline, and respect for self and others. It's already hard enough to be transgender – my trans siblings are frequently harassed, bullied, abused and too often killed just for trying to live as their authentic selves and be contributing members of their community and society.

The reality is that this bill will not only impact transgender children, but it will also impact your child, who might be, for example, a muscular, athletic girl. Any child who falls outside of rigid gender stereotypes will suffer unnecessarily. Our daughters are and will continue to leave sport – the last bastion of safety from the perils of growing up in this intense world. I was that girl who desperately needed an outlet and I cannot imagine my life without sports through my school years. This bill is appalling and a gross violation of these children's and their parent's basic human rights. This is so much energy and Ohio taxpayer money being spent on terrorizing the a small number of transgender athletes, and their parents.

There are claims that inclusion and equity will allow trans women and girls to “take over

¹ See <https://womencanintl.com/>.



women's sports” and take away opportunities such as scholarships. Yet there have been over 54,000 Olympians since the first trans inclusion policy put forward by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) policy in 2004 and only in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics was there one openly transgender woman competing.² There is no evidence of women high school or college athletes losing scholarships to transgender women athletes and few instances of transgender athletes winning, despite media frenzy.

At the highest levels of sport, transgender athletes are welcomed and included. After spending nearly two years consulting organizations on all sides of the issue, and a deep review of the current science, the IOC saw that there are no valid, robust, encompassing peer-reviewed scientific reasons to prevent transgender women from competing at the highest level.³ If the IOC allows transgender athletes, why are we having conversations to limit the participation of youth? Arguments about biological advantages and unfairness based on biology are a gross reduction of complicated humans to hormones and chromosomes and neglects that sport achievement requires a highly complex and long-term dance between body, mind, heart, and spirit, access to resources and a supportive environment. I know this because I have lived it.

If we want safe and equitable spaces for women and girls, let’s address sexual assault, harassment, abuse, pay equity, media exposure, funding and equitable facilities and equipment. Banning trans girls from sport does nothing to help the fight for equity that I have been fighting for decades.

I urge you to reject House Bill 6. Thank you for your time and consideration.

President, WomenCAN International

<https://womencanintl.com/>

pam@womencanintl.com

² O'Neill, A. (2022, June 21). *Summer olympics: Number of athletes by gender 1896-2020*. Statista. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1090581/olympics-number-athletes-by-gender-since-1896/>; Statista Research Department, (2022, December 8). *Winter Olympic Games athlete participants 1924-2022*. Statista. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266368/number-of-winter-olympic-games-participants-since-1924-by-gender/>

³ IOC releases Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations. (2021, November 16). *IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations*. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from <https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/Beyond-the-Games/Human-Rights/IOC-Framework-Fairness-Inclusion-Non-discrimination-2021.pdf>.