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**House Higher Education Committee
May 3, 2023**

Written Testimony on HB 6

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Chairman Young, Vice Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 6.

The Ohio School Psychologists Association, which represents more than 800 school psychologist members across Ohio, has strong concerns with this legislation that would negatively impact the ability of transgender children to participate in school sports.

School psychologists are guided by an ethical code that calls on them to respect the rights and dignity of everyone as well as a duty to do no harm (NASP, 2020, Principle II.1). The National Association of School Psychologists' ethical standards require school psychologists to validate and affirm a young person's authentic lived experience, value their integrity, ensure their safety, and promote their well-being (NASP, 2020). School psychologists are ethically obligated to advocate for positive school policies and practices to protect the legal rights of students and parents (NASP, 2020, Principle IV.1.2). Further, school psychologists are prohibited from engaging in discriminatory actions, including relating to gender and sexual orientation (Principle I.3).

To advance gender diverse students' academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and development potential, schools must be safe, secure, equitable, and inclusive environments for all students. There is ample evidence that an opportunity for all students to participate in sports results in positive outcomes, such as better grades, greater homework completion, higher educational and occupational aspirations, improved self-esteem, leadership development, and acquisition of social skills and problem solving (Darling et al., 2005; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Nelson, & Gordon-Larsen, 2006; Ortega et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). This legislation targets an incredibly small population of Ohio children who are both transgender and student athletes and discussion of this topic by itself has already caused harm to this vulnerable group of young people. Please consider how HB 6 would not only harm these few students but also their teammates who could be forcibly required to prove their gender by anyone who seeks to bring such a challenge.

The National Association of School Psychologists issued a position statement that calls for inclusive participation on sports teams and other sex-segregated activities that correspond with their gender identity (NASP, 2022). We oppose the use of invasive medical examinations to confirm or challenge one's gender identity. Although we appreciate the exclusion of this language from the bill, we are still concerned about how young people will be asked to prove their gender.



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Barring outright rejection of this legislation, OSPA supports inclusion of the Ohio High School Athletic Association's policy on transgender student participation as replacement language for this bill. Just as there is variability in the performance of all student athletes, there is no credible behavioral science evidence that allowing students to participate in sports consistent with gender expression would harm the fairness of the sport (APA, 2023).

Thank you for allowing us to provide testimony. We appreciate your consideration.

References

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