

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 68

Senate Government Oversight Committee

6 December, 2023

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 68. My name is Natalie Johnson and I am a concerned constituent of Athens County.

I have always considered myself an athlete. Whether it was playing kickball in the empty lot of my neighborhood as a kid, church league volleyball, or lacrosse at the collegiate level, playing on a sports team let me feel like I belonged to something greater than myself.

In my time playing sports I learned what it really means to be a teammate. To share glances with one another on the field as your coach screams at you from the sidelines. To cheer on each of your teammates as if their achievements were your own. To own a win or a loss as a collective outcome rather than appointing blame or individually claiming a victory. These are truths to teams regardless of sport and to players regardless of gender identity. If there truly is no “I” in team, then why are we singling out our trans teammates?

My senior year of high school lacrosse we played a team near Cleveland and we lost, bad. We lost because the season before ten of our twelve starters graduated. We lost because we had focused primarily on offensive drills leaving our defense out to dry. We lost because they were simply the better team. At no point did it cross my mind then, nor does it occur to me now, that we lost because there was a trans girl on their team. That girl was simply on the field trying to find the same sense of belonging that we all were. This was a kid just trying to figure out where she belonged in her own body, just like every other teenage girl on that field was.

The last thing that she needed, that any of us need at age, was the government bringing a spotlight to her body, trying to define what she is and what she isn't. Young girls already face enough of that as it is. I implore you to vote no on House Bill 68 and urge you to support policies that uphold the rights and dignity of transgender individuals, ensure their access to necessary healthcare, and allow them to participate in sports consistent with their gender identity.

Thank you for your consideration,

Natalie Johnson

Ohioan