



**Ohio State Senate Public Testimony
Government Oversight Committee**

December 6, 2023

Chair Kristina Roegner, Vice Chair Niraj Antani, Ranking Member Paula Hicks-Hudson, and other members of the Government Oversight Committee:

My name is Oliver Licking, and my pronouns are he/him. I'm the Gender Equity Policy Manager for Equitas Health. As you're likely aware, Equitas Health is a non-profit community healthcare system and one of the largest LGBTQ+ and HIV/AIDS serving healthcare organizations in the country. Each year, we serve tens of thousands of patients in Ohio, Texas, Kentucky, and West Virginia, and since 1984, we have been working to advance "care for all."¹ I'm thankful for the opportunity to address you all today, and I'm here to provide testimony in opposition to the sports-related provisions of HB 68, which would perpetuate discrimination against transgender, non-binary, gender expansive, and intersex student-athletes across the state.

In a previous hearing, one of my colleagues – Dr. Rhea Debussy (she/her), who is the Director of External Affairs at Equitas Health and a former facilitator for the NCAA's LGBTQ OneTeam – shared several scientific facts related to the dangers of the sports-related provisions of HB 68 and discrimination against gender expansive athletes. However, it bears repeating, given that members of the committee seemed unaware of this scientific evidence. As noted by Dr. Debussy:

“There has also been an evolving body of research about gender expansive and intersex athletes. The bulk of this research demonstrates that gender expansive and intersex athletes do not have an advantage over cisgender and non-intersex athletes,² while also noting the intense discrimination that many of these athletes face.³ For instance, 2015 research from the *Journal of Sporting Cultures and Identities* – which focused on race times specifically – shows that transgender women do not have a competitive advantage over cisgender women.⁴ Additionally, 2018 research from the academic journal, *Endocrine Reviews*, demonstrates that a testosterone – when suppressed to the standardized range of cisgender women – does not provide an inherent advantage for trans-feminine and intersex athletes.⁵ Similarly 2019 research from *The Lancet* notes that the notion of 'biological sex' is often incorrectly used to exclude these athletes,⁶ and this is often done with pseudo-scientific presumptions about hormones and secondary sex characteristics. In short, the scientific literature clearly demonstrates that there is no

¹ <https://equitashealth.com/about-us/>

² <https://www.science.org/content/article/scientist-racing-discover-how-gender-transitions-alter-athletic-performance-including>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5357259/>

⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307766116_Race_Times_for_Transgender_Athletes

⁵ <https://academic.oup.com/edrv/article/39/5/803/5052770>

⁶ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32764-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32764-3/fulltext)

problem to fix; instead, legislation, like HB 6, simply targets gender expansive and intersex youth with discrimination.”⁷

Additionally, I’d like to add some further insights, based upon my lived experience within the broader LGBTQ+ community and my role of Gender Equity Policy Manager for Equitas Health. When considering the dangers of an anti-trans sports ban, one has to take into consideration the fact that a bill like HB 68 is simply refusing to allow kids to exist as kids. Children – including transgender, non-binary, and intersex youth – should be able to live their childhood years focused on their classes, families, interpersonal friendship connections, community building, as well as having access to youth sports. Children of all backgrounds deserve access to the community building and healthy lifestyles offered by youth athletics programs without having to be mired in political debate of their participation in said sports, especially since, as stated above, there is no good scientific evidence stating there is any reason to restrict transgender, non-binary, gender expansive and intersex youth.

It is also important to remember that the so-called ‘research’ that informs bills like HB 68 is methodologically flawed, as noted in Dr. Debussy’s previous testimony.⁸ As noted in that previous testimony, Dr. Timothy Roberts, who is a high-profile author of a study that is often and misleadingly cited by people who propose such anti-trans sports bans, has said that: “I’m definitely coming out and saying, ‘Hey, this doesn’t apply to recreational athletes, doesn’t apply to youth athletics.’”⁹ Even so, we do know that such proposed bans have a negative impact on the mental health of LGBTQ+ – and especially transgender, non-binary, gender expansive, and intersex – youth. For instance, The Trevor Project’s 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health notes that a shocking 83% of transgender and non-binary youth indicate that they have worried about gender expansive people being denied the ability to play sports due to state or local laws.¹⁰

And finally, I would like to remind you that Equitas Health – along with several community partners who are here today – continues to actively oppose both the gender affirming care ban of HB 68 and the sports-related provisions of HB 68. As such, we will continue to urge this committee to not advance this bill from the committee or schedule it for further hearings, given that it is both unnecessary and discriminatory in nature.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁷ https://ohiohouse.gov/committees/higher-education/meetings/cmte_h_higher_ed_1_2023-04-19-0900_351

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/trans-women-retain-athletic-edge-after-year-hormone-therapy-study-n1252764>

¹⁰ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/#anti-transgender-legislation>