

Opponent Testimony of HB2238
For the Senate Education Committee
March 6, 2023
Matthew Thompson
Teacher/Parent/KS Resident

Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent written testimony on House Bill 2238.

I am a public high school teacher, as well as the parent of a 4 year old and 14 year old. This bill is an example of egregious government overreach, and in seeking to solve a problem that does not exist, it would harm one of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of people in the state.

In my capacity as a public educator, I have worked with several high school age students who identify as transgender. In many cases, school is the only safe place these children have in which they can be themselves and feel accepted for who they are. HB2238 would jeopardize that by singling out these young people, drawing unwelcome attention to them, and creating an atmosphere of suspicion, intolerance, and fear.

Transgender youth are already at extraordinarily high risk of suicide, assault, and homelessness. Using the power of state government to make this population even more isolated and vilified will only serve to exacerbate these dangers. As a teacher, I can confidently state that transgender children playing sports is not a concern for my students or my colleagues, but a desire to feel safe at school absolutely is.

Furthermore, the state government has no business dictating how high school teams choose to address this issue; it is decidedly a matter best handled at the local level. The Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) already offers guidance on this subject, and there is no evidence whatsoever that the current approach is not working. There is no evidence that any cisgender female athlete has been harmed or treated unfairly in any way as a result of the rare handful of instances in which a transgender female athlete has played on a girls' team.

It has been stated by some supporters of this bill that it is necessary due to the possibility of cisgender female athletes losing out on college scholarships due to the participation of transgender females in high school sports. Again, no evidence has been shared that this scenario has ever occurred in Kansas.

However, if improving access to higher education is truly a goal of the legislature, I suggest the state allocate some of our budget surplus to developing scholarships and subsidizing tuition at public universities and community colleges. This would be a far more impactful and productive way of supporting all high school students, rather than targeting a vulnerable minority population with this misguided bill.

I am strongly opposed to HB2238. Thank you for your time and consideration.