

February 13, 2023; 1:30 pm
House Committee on Education
Rep. Adam Thomas, Chair

Betsy Wickstrom
Physician and parent

HB2238 – Creating the "fairness in women's sports" act to require that female student athletic teams only include members who are biologically female.

Opponent, Written Only

Chair Thomas and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Opponent testimony on HB2238.

As a parent of a trans person and a physician who has cared for patients who have/ are transitioning due to gender dysphoria, I must speak out against this cruel and harmful bill.

Those students who are in transition, feeling trapped in an external body that is in conflict with what their heart and mind know to be their true self, are among the most vulnerable of our children. Constantly the target of bullying and ridicule from students AND adults whose approval, like any child, they crave, trans kids disproportionately become anxious, depressed and suicidal. This is fact, backed by research and medical experience.

What is NOT a fact is the discrimination based idea that trans kids are somehow a threat to their fellow students and do not deserve thoughtful education in every aspect of school life, including sports. It is NOT universally true that someone assigned one sex at birth has a physiologic advantage over someone assigned another sex. There is no science demonstrating this fallacy, as athletic skill is expressed on a spectrum among all students. There is no study which concludes that a child in transition from male to female is more likely to attack or harm their fellow students- this is a baseless fear and using it to craft school policy would be discrimination.

Finally, I am appalled to think about how a coach or school administrator would go about determining a child's biological gender. You want parents to have the right to direct everything else about their child's education, but you can't accept that a parent can tell you who their child is? If a student is presented to you as trans or non-binary by the parents who have loved and raised them, why is this not acceptable? If you go so far as to say a child will submit to a physical exam to "prove" their gender, this would violate that person in a way YOU would never submit to.

Children deserve to be educated in an atmosphere of acceptance, by instructors who help them become the healthiest, happiest version of themselves. This bill is discriminatory and cruel and must be stuck down.

I cannot offer a solution to a problem which does not, in fact, exist by any medical or sociological study, and recommend this committee either drop the issue completely or promote education of the actual facts of the issue- that trans children are threatened and vulnerable, NOT a threat.

I thank the committee for taking the time to hear my testimony, from my experience as a parent and physician, opposing this discriminatory bill.