

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

Leah Lewsader
Kansas Resident

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.

My name is Leah Lewsader and as a lifelong athlete and former educator, I understand firsthand the important role athletics plays in a child's life. The purpose of my testimony is to stand in strong opposition to HB2238.

All children deserve the right to be included as their true and whole selves. Trans youth are entitled to the same opportunities as their peers, including the ability to play sports. I have personally benefited from and have seen hundreds of my own students benefit from sports. Sports teaches us some of the most important lessons we can learn in life: teamwork, inclusion, hard work, persistence, how to be a humble winner, and how to be a gracious loser. These are lessons learned as children that we should continue to learn as adults. This bill would prevent all children from learning these lessons, regardless of their gender identity. This bill singles out one group of children and bans them from learning, growing, and playing simply because they are considered different in one area of their very complex human identity. Trans people have been participating in sports at all levels for years. Unfortunately, media focus on a small number of trans athletes has fueled misinformation and led to bullying and misguided bills such as this one. History has shown that trans women do not have an unfair advantage or an unbeatable competitive edge. There is no widespread domination by trans women in sports. Further, this bill does not target only older, competitive high school athletes. This bill affects elementary school children at an age when no one is competing for recognition or college scholarships. As a woman and an athlete, it is far more important to me that everyone feel included and celebrated in my sport, including trans folks. I am not concerned, and never have been, with an imagined dominance by trans women. Our society as a whole, benefits far more from the inclusion of all people in sports than it will from excluding trans children. When we provide access to sports for everyone, regardless of how they identify, we foster an environment that facilitates the development of kind, hard working, and humble persons. Our children and our state deserve better than a bill that is based on inflammatory, skewed information, outdated science, and attempts to build political clout.

There are many issues in women's sports that do in fact need to be addressed, but banning trans children is not one of them. This bill totally misses the mark and I stand in firm opposition to it. Thank you for your time and consideration.