

## **Testimony in Opposition to HB 2238**

**Senate Committee on Education, Sen. Molly Baumgardner, Chair**

March 6, 2023

Good morning, Mme. Chair, Members of the House Committee on Education:

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber – I am the Executive Director of Kansas Interfaith Action. We are a statewide, multi-faith, issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public. Specifically, we prioritize critical personal autonomy, racial, economic, and climate justice issues. We represent several of the primary mainline denominations, as well as Jewish and Muslim communities and individuals throughout the state. We stand in opposition to HB 2238.

Faith leaders and denominational bodies are deeply frustrated with the connection of this bill, and its quiet assumption to use religious doctrine, to deny transgender athletes from competing in the realm that reflects their identity. The primary concern of the faith community is for the dignity and well-being of young athletes, and those who love or coach them, to know that they are loved by and created in the image of God – to have the perfectness of God’s Love extended to them wherever their paths take them. To give only one example, the United Church of Christ released a trans-nonbinary pastoral letter in 2022 affirming God’s requirement to love one another as they present themselves to the world. Among those principles are:

- “The lives of trans and nonbinary are precious...created...for a life free from hatred and recrimination.”
- UCC prevails on members, and indeed the public, to promote compassion, care, and openly support the issues of trans-nonbinary individuals wherever intolerance has taken root.

Kansas Interfaith Action opposes HB 2238 because it, like similar measures in past years, does not comport with these principles. Bills such as 2238 seek to leverage misinformation and fear regarding transgender people for political gain. However, the toll it extracts from transgender youth is often paid for with their lives – leaving their loved ones and communities reeling from loss and lives limited in true self-actualization.

Our argument is simple:

HB 2238 prioritizes unequal hierarchy of rights and paths to relief, as noted in Section 4 – which shutteres transgender athletes’ ability to work with various entities to create an opportunity to participate; and Section 5 (b) – which allows cisgender athletes, or their representatives, to seek damages against entities who wish not to engage in the harmful practice of refusing athletes an opportunity to play due to identity.

As the UCC 2022 trans-nonbinary pastoral letter unequivocally states: “Do not be silent when this wave of persecution threatens human life.” We are called to recognize every life as valuable and to create paths where institutions are held accountable and required to elevate to new levels of global understanding.

For the reasons outlined, I urge you to oppose HB 2238 and thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.