



**Testimony of GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)  
in opposition to  
H 7727 – Relating to Education – Fairness in Women’s Sports Act**

April 10, 2024

House Committee on Education  
c/o Lisa Cataldi, Clerk  
HouseEducation@rilegislature.gov

Dear Chair McNamara, First Vice Chair Noret, Second Vice Chair Kislak, and Members of the Committee:

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (“GLAD”) submits this testimony in firm opposition to H 7727 –the “Fairness in Women’s Sports Act.” H 7727 would inflict harm on transgender students by prohibiting them from playing sports with their fellow students and is driven by animus against this vulnerable population.

As you may know, GLAD is New England’s leading legal rights organization dedicated to ensuring equality for LGBTQ people and people living with HIV. GLAD dedicates substantial resources to ensuring justice and equality for transgender people so they can be included and thrive in society like other community members. To that end, we are actively litigating several cases protecting medical care for transgender people, and we have written amicus briefs in several cases challenging bans on participation in sports similar to this bill, such as *Doe v. Horne*, *appeal docketed*, No. 23-70111 (9th Cir.) and *B.P.J. v. West Va. St. Bd. of Educ.*, *appeal docketed*, No. 23-1078 (4th Cir.).

This bill is harmful for transgender and nonbinary students by excluding them from participation in school sports. Engagement in sports has numerous benefits for students. As the National Federation of State High School Associations elaborates, high school sports allow students to develop “a stronger sense of self-confidence in building relationships with others and having an expanded capacity for empathy,” “a better understanding of self and in so doing understanding how their actions affect others,” and “foundations for lifelong fitness habits.”<sup>1</sup> For transgender students especially, participation in high school sports reaps significant benefits. According to one transgender student surveyed, playing sports “help[s] me cope with gender dysphoria and depression.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Steve Amaro, *Participation in High School Athletics Has Long-Lasting Benefits*, NFHS (Jan. 22, 2020), <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/participation-in-high-school-athletics-has-long-lasting-benefits/>.

Another transgender student reported, “I find that sports are a good way to distract me from negative thoughts.”<sup>2</sup>

This bill represents a sweeping exclusion of transgender girls from school sports that would deny them the critical benefits of participating in sports programs. School sports provide a unique opportunity for students to learn self-esteem, sportsmanship, leadership, and self-discipline that fosters healthy adolescent development. Depriving transgender girls of the benefit of school sports—a benefit they currently have in Rhode Island—takes away an important educational opportunity that is routinely provided to other students. Over the past few years, 25 states have in short order passed bans on transgender youth inclusion in sports (Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming). These bans seek solutions to problems that do not exist and are part of a sad effort in some states to target transgender youth for political gain. Rhode Island, including its schools, have for years established inclusive participation policies that ensure a level playing field. H 7727 undermines those efforts.

In addition, by singling out one group of girls to be deprived of the chance to participate on school teams and in athletic programs, H 7727 seeks to mark transgender girls as a disfavored class and threatens to create a school climate of discrimination and bias. The bill creates a transgender-status-based classification that unfairly stigmatizes transgender girls by excluding them from an integral part of school programming and of the school community. While this bill will have an especially negative impact on transgender girls, it also inflicts harm on all girls by perpetuating unfounded stereotypes that have long fueled sex discrimination in sports. When we tell transgender girls that they can’t play girls’ sports, it sends the harmful message that they don’t belong and that they must choose between being themselves and participating in activity alongside their peers.

Rhode Island has a long history of ensuring equality for our transgender community members, and we trust that Rhode Island will continue that work by not passing this discriminatory measure. Thank you for your time and consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or for additional information.

Sincerely yours,



Patience Crozier, Esq.  
Director of Family Advocacy  
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders  
pcrozier@glad.org

---

<sup>2</sup> *GLBTQ Youth Sports Participation*, The Trevor Project (Sept. 15, 2021), <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/lgbtq-youth-sports-participation-2/>.