

Chairperson Joseph M. McNamara
House Education Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

April 2, 2024

Dear Chairperson McNamara:

I write to you all today on behalf of Youth Pride, Inc. the only 501(c)3 that explicitly serves the unique needs of the LGBTQ+ youth community within the state of Rhode Island. A duty we perform with the utmost professionalism and dedication. In addition to the array of services and programming we provide, we serve as representatives and advocates for the community. Which is why I write to you today in strong opposition to H7727, the proposed Fairness in Women's Sports Act. While ensuring fairness in women's sports is undeniably important, this bill takes a misguided and deliberately harmful approach. It targets a problem that does not exist on a significant scale and creates unnecessary obstacles for transgender student-athletes who simply want to participate and compete alongside their peers.

There is currently no evidence of widespread dominance by transgender athletes in women's sports. In fact, transgender athletes currently participate without issue for the same reasons as everyone else – to be part of a team, challenge themselves, and experience the joy of competition. This bill excludes them from that opportunity, sending a message of rejection and undermining their mental well-being.

The bill's reliance on a physician's determination of sex based on a rigid set of criteria is not only intrusive but also scientifically inaccurate. Sex is a complex biological concept that is determined by a combination of factors, including chromosomes, genes, hormones, and internal and external anatomy. These factors can vary significantly from person to person, and there is no single definitive marker of sex. For example, some people are born with chromosomes that do not neatly fall into the categories of male or female. Others may have a condition called Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, where they are genetically male but insensitive to testosterone and develop external female characteristics. The bill's proposed method of sex determination would fail to account for these variations in human biology.

Denying transgender athletes the opportunity to compete fairly is not the answer. A more equitable solution lies in creating a fair and transparent system that takes into account the unique circumstances of each athlete. Existing governing bodies, such as the NCAA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), have established protocols for transgender athlete participation that can serve as a valuable resource. These protocols typically involve evaluating factors such as an athlete's competition history, hormone levels, and time since transition. Let's collaborate with these experts, medical professionals, and representatives from the transgender community to develop science-based and inclusive standards for transgender athlete participation in Rhode Island. This approach would ensure that all athletes, regardless of sex identity, have the opportunity to compete in a safe, fair, and respectful environment.

Participation in sports offers tremendous benefits for young people, fostering teamwork, discipline, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. This bill creates a barrier for transgender athletes, hindering their chance to reap these benefits and contribute to their school communities. Sports can be a powerful tool for social development, teaching young people important life lessons about perseverance, goal setting, and the importance of working together towards a common goal. Denying transgender athletes the opportunity to participate in sports not only excludes them from these benefits but also sends a message that they are not welcome or valued. This can have a negative impact on their self-esteem and overall well-being.

I urge you to reject H7727. Let's focus on creating a truly inclusive environment in women's sports, one that celebrates the talents of all athletes and fosters a sense of belonging. We can achieve fairness without resorting to discrimination.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Youth Pride, Inc.
743 Westminster St
Providence, RI 02903