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April 10, 2024

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara, Chair
House Committee on Education
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7727 -- Relating to Education -- Fairness in Women's Sports Act

Dear Chair McNamara:

Please accept this letter of opposition to H 7727, legislation that would categorize women by their biological identity at birth rather than their gender identity for the purpose of organized sports. This act would take effect January 1, 2025.

Transgender children and adolescents vary in athletic ability, just as other children and adolescents do. In February 2021, the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education issued a statement supporting transgender and nonbinary students' full and equal participation in all education programs and activities, including sports¹. The American Psychological Association took the same position in February 2020².

There is ample evidence that an opportunity for adolescents to participate in sports results in positive outcomes, including better grades, greater homework completion, higher educational and occupational aspirations, and improved self-esteem. The mental health benefits of sports participation are especially significant for transgender youth^{3,4}, and banning them from participation could lead to an increase in existing mental health disparities among this vulnerable population^{5,6}.

Additionally, excluding any subset of girls from sports can encourage divisiveness and compromise group cohesion, undermining the benefits all youth deserve from team sports⁷. Overwhelmingly, experts oppose bans on transgender sports participation, citing "the severe consequences to the well-being of transgender youth"^{8,9}. All youth should have access to the benefits of sports.

Preventing adolescents from participating in school sports is not healthy for such adolescents from a public health perspective. It is for this reason that I urge the Committee to not recommend the passage of H 7727. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Staci A. Fischer, MD".

Staci Fischer, MD
Acting Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education
The Honorable Patricia L. Morgan
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel for the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy

- ¹ [National Coalition for Women & Girls in Education Written Comment for Title IX Public Hearing \(Sex Discrimination\)](#), June 11, 2021.
- ² [American Psychological Association's Resolution on Supporting Sexual/Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents in Schools](#), February 2020.
- ³ DeChants, J. P., Green, A. E., Price, M. N., & Davis, C. K. (2024). "I Get Treated Poorly in Regular School—Why Add To It?": *Transgender Girls' Experiences Choosing to Play or Not Play Sports*. *Transgender Health*, 9(1), 61–67. <https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2022.0066>
- ⁴ LaRocca, D., James, K. A., Rosenberg, S., Ma, M., & Brooks-Russell, A. (2023). *Team sports participation, depression, and suicidal ideation in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning adolescents*. *Psychology in the Schools*, 60, 902–911. <https://doi-org.ric.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/pits.22792>
- ⁵ Buzuvis, E. (2021). *Law, policy, and the participation of transgender athletes in the United States*. *Sport Management Review*, 24(3), 439–451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14413523.2021.1880757>
- ⁶ Pharr JR, Chien LC, Gakh M, Flatt J, Kittle K, Terry E. (2022). *Serial Mediation Analysis of the Association of Familiarity with Transgender Sports Bans and Suicidality among Sexual and Gender Minority Adults in the United States*. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022 Aug 26;19(17):10641. doi: 10.3390/ijerph191710641. PMID: 36078355; PMCID: PMC9518152.
- ⁷ ACLU [Upholding trans athletes' rights requires rooting out the inaccurate beliefs underlying harmful policies sweeping through state legislatures](#), April 30, 2020.
- ⁸ Hughes, L. D., Dowshen, N., Kidd, K. M., Operario, D., Renjilian, C., & Gamarel, K. E. (2022). *Pediatric Provider Perspectives on Laws and Policies Impacting Sports Participation for Transgender Youth*. *LGBT health*, 9(4), 247–253. <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2021.0392>
- ⁹ Williams, C., McKenna, J., Artessa, L., Moore, L.B.M. (2023). *Team Effort: A Call for Mental Health Clinicians to Support Sports Access for Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth*. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. Volume 62, Issue 8. Pages 837-839. ISSN 0890-8567. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2023.01.022>.