

February 15, 2023

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TESTIMONY ON HB#0359 - UNFAVORABLE

**Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams and Sports –
Designation Based on Sex (Save Women’s Sports Act)**

TO: Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Gemma Holgate

My name is Gemma Holgate. I am a resident of District 13. I am submitting this testimony against HB#0359, Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams and Sports – Designation Based on Sex (Save Women’s Sports Act).

I am a transgender woman and a strong ally for transgender and non-binary children in both Howard County and the state of Maryland. I work closely with non-profits and my local Howard County Public School System to ensure that LGBTQ students and staff are treated with the equality and respect that they deserve. While this bill no longer directly impacts me as I am well past my time of interscholastic sports, I strongly believe that it will harm those participating now and those who will be participating in the future. That harm will come by either forcing them onto a team that does not align with their gender identity or, if that proves too distressing for them, excluding them entirely from the experience and benefits of interscholastic and/or intramural sports.

I think of Maryland as offering an inclusive and supportive school environment, part of which is interscholastic and intramural sports. These sports serve as a place where kids can build skills and friendships that will serve them for a lifetime and this bill exclude a subset of Marylanders, namely those who are transgender and/or non-binary, from that sports experience and it would do a disservice to our children. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a unfavorable report on HB#0359.**