

January 29, 2024

**Re: Oppose HB47 – Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams - Designation Based on Sex (Fairness In Girls" Sports Act)**

To Whom It May Concern:

As a social worker, constituent, and community member residing in the state of Maryland, I am writing to you to request that you **oppose** the proposed House bill: Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams - Designation Based on Sex ([HB47](#)).

To its core this proposed bill is yet another iteration of what has become a wave of hateful anti-LGBTQ+ and especially anti-trans rhetoric that is sweeping this country. Such coordinated efforts are designed to instigate fear through promotion of disinformation and dehumanizing stereotypes and to normalize systemic discrimination toward transgender people and communities.

Anti-trans sports bills like HB47 effectively create a precedent for discrimination, social segregation, ostracism, and exclusion in public spaces and social life – concepts that are antithetical to the core principles of civil and human rights. Furthermore, such bills aim to politicize personal activities, hobbies, and passions that are inextricably linked to cooperation, health, and community.

I am not entirely sure, how we can collectively prioritize the mental health and well-being of our Maryland communities, while our own lawmakers are simultaneously engaging in hate-based campaigns that actively harm transgender children, adults, and their loved ones.

As a social worker, I have seen first-hand how such forms of social and legal discrimination harm the mental health and well-being of transgender people as evidenced in this community's exponentially growing rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, and suicide. Furthermore, as a social worker, I know that such mental health outcomes are completely preventable when we author and implement laws and social policies that promote safety and inclusion.

Maryland communities and voters have already made it known that hate has no home in our state, as evidenced in the historic passage and implementation of the Trans Health Equity Act. Thus, this proposed House bill runs in direct conflict both to the mental health and wellbeing of our transgender community members as well as against the overall value systems of our larger collective community.

As a social worker, I know too that there remain pressing social and resource concerns that affect our communities – like addressing endemic racial and socio-economic disparities, like the lack of affordable housing, like finally ending the HIV epidemic, like responding to the opioid crisis, and like ensuring that there is access to essential and life-saving mental health care for all of our expansive and diverse Maryland communities.

Instead of fanning the fires of division and hate, I ask that you focus on and respond to the long-enduring crises that demand our attention and unity so that our communities can finally and truly heal, grow, and thrive.

Respectfully,  
**Liam Westgate, MBA, MSW, LCSW-C**