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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB 0588, Education - Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams and Sports - Designation (Fairness in Girls' Sports Act)

2/18/2025

TO: Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Ayla Hurley

Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, my name is Ayla Hurley and I've resided in Maryland my entire life. Supporters of SB 0588 say that it is “not about trans people,” but by attempting to narrow the scope to “biological sex,” it inherently will unfairly impact trans people - which is precisely what supporters of this bill are hoping for. It’s obtusely-veiled transphobia under the guise of protecting girls at the expense of the most vulnerable girls. Those opposing this bill are those who would’ve been directly affected by it as kids, who are raising trans athletes, and professionals providing widely-accepted recommendations from the top medical and psychological associations in our country.

In my time as a volunteer counselor for the largest queer-focused youth crisis center in the US, I know deeply how bills like this directly contribute to trans youth struggling with their mental health. I have conversed with people as young as eleven who know that they are “different,” and whose only wish is to be accepted as they are. Instead, adults in their lives, on TV, and in government suddenly accuse them of being malicious predators when finding out that they’re not the sex they were assigned at birth. I’ve talked kids off bridges. I’ve talked them out of the pills in the cabinet. I’ve talked them into moving the knife away from their wrist - “how would it feel to go on a walk right now? We can keep talking. I’m here for you.”

May you never have to have that conversation - but roughly **half** of transgender and nonbinary youth considered suicide in the last year, according to the Trevor Project’s 2023 National Survey on Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People. These bills tell them that they don’t get to know who they are; that they’re malicious actors, simply for trying to ease the discomforts they feel in their minds and bodies. Trans kids just want to be kids, like all of their peers.

Youth sports are supposed to be a place to learn the values of teamwork and community. Without an affirming community of support, according to a study by Ryan, et al. in 2009, transgender and nonbinary youth are eight times more likely to report attempting suicide. The disturbing thought that the Delegates who introduced this bill care more about their flawed understanding of sex and gender, than that those kids might try to kill themselves, is upsetting on a deep level. Let ALL kids be kids. Please do not pass this blatantly discriminatory bill. Thank you.