



January 27, 2025

**Re: HB0156 | Fairness in Girls' Sports Act**

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

The Washington County Association of Student Councils (WCASC) is a coalition of high school and middle school student councils dedicated to amplifying the voices of thousands of students within Washington County Public Schools. WCASC strives to create connections among those within the community, providing students access to avenues in which they can become more civically involved at the local level. The mission of WCASC is to elevate the collective student voice by building communities of student leaders, giving students agency to speak their truth, and inspiring students to take action.

**HB 156** — the “Fairness” in Girls’ Sports Act — seeks to confine participation in interscholastic Junior Varsity and Varsity sporting teams solely by a student’s biological sex.

It is imperative to remember that very real people with very real lives are affected by decisions made at our state capital every day. Transgender Americans have perpetually faced horrific discrimination and undergone unnecessary strife due to their mere being. Our trans youth are especially at risk when legislation such as **HB 156** is even broached as we assign bodies to arguments advocating directly against the existence of these children. Other states with legislators that have instituted similar laws permitting segregation on the basis of biological sex in sports have effectively stripped their youth population of their being — children who are not their own, living lives that are not their own.

Transgender student-athletes have the same rights and the same motivation as their cisgender counterparts to participate to the fullest extent in athletic endeavors. According to our own national precedent set in the Education Amendments of 1972 under Title IX, no person shall be denied the benefits from or participation in an educational program receiving money from the federal government on the basis of sex — which encompasses one’s gender identity. The passing of this bill would inherently disadvantage trans athletes from participating in sports due to associated implications that they are not welcome nor valid in their identities. This has been shown to colossally increase feelings of gender dysphoria which, according to the National Institute of Health, has heavy links to increases in levels of suicidal ideation<sup>1</sup>. In a study of 905 adolescents and young adults, 47% felt that transgender athletes should be able to participate in competitive sports based on gender identity, and 10% stated that participation should be based on the stage of transition, hormone levels, or sport being played.

As WCASC, our organization has voted to oppose **HB 156** as it misaligned with our legislative platform which states that:

1. We oppose: “Discrimination in social settings based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation” (WCASC Legislative Platform, Plank VIII; C, 2),

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<sup>1</sup> Day, Derek S et al. “Gender Dysphoria and Suicidal Ideation: Clinical Observations from a Psychiatric Emergency Service.” *Cureus* vol. 11,11 e6132. 12 Nov. 2019, doi:10.7759/cureus.6132

2. All students, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion should be granted the opportunity to safely and fully express their ideas (WCASC Legislative Platform, Plank I; A, 3).

**HB 156** would deny transgender athletes the benefits of sports that exist so readily available to cisgender athletes. Sports promote lower rates of obesity, greater levels of comradery, stronger social bonds, and higher academic performance. Physical activity additionally releases serotonin and endorphins into the brain; by denying someone play on their preferred team, the invalidation of their identity in addition to idleness can become conducive to the breeding of suicidal ideations, anxiety, or depression. For these reasons WCASC respectfully requests an unfavorable report from the committee. We are infinitely grateful for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barna Begzad".

Barna Begzad  
President, Washington County Association of Student Councils