



House Bill 156
Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams
- Designation Based on Sex (Fairness in Girls' Sports Act)
January 27, 2025
Opposed

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC) is opposed to HB 156, which would ban trans children from playing on the team that aligns with their gender.

TRAC is a Maryland based, and entirely trans-led coalition committed to ensuring that all transgender and gender expansive Marylanders can live safe and affirming lives. Our membership includes healthcare providers, attorneys, academics, organizers and other community members who all stand in strong support for protecting children from discriminatory and harmful laws and policies like HB 156.

Similar to the effect of other anti-trans bills proposed recently in Maryland and other states, there have been a variety of negative intended and unintended consequences for trans and cisgender children alike. One such terrible consequence is a growing movement of angry parents and others emboldened by these misguided policies to demand to see the genitals of members of an opposing team after their kid lost a game, even in games without a single trans child. There have been examples of states attempting to implement genital inspection requirements placed on children before they are allowed to play sports. Proponents purport to be “protecting girls,” yet enforcing this policy in Maryland, like in other places, could lead to young girls having to answer invasive personal questions about things like their menstrual cycle, or undergoing physical inspections if they want to play sports. That is a major violation of privacy and opens the door for more abuse in women’s athletics.

Another insidious response to these bills as proposed, not even signed into law, is the overall negative mental health outcomes they have on trans children. Recently the first peer reviewed study was published examining the impact of anti-trans policies on mental health, with the published findings noting that states with these policies introduced saw suicide attempts by trans and gender nonconforming teens increase by as much as 72%.

This is also a horrible waste of the General Assembly’s time considering a bill that focuses on targeting a small minority of vulnerable young people when we have real and pressing problems to tackle in Maryland and across the country. In some cases, states with a trans youth sports ban enacted had been implementing this type of legislation for **one** student in the entire state. The notion that trans girls will dominate sports is completely inaccurate, and in fact, the opposite is true, with trans girls and women severely underrepresented in sports. There are 510,000 athletes in the NCAA, which based on population estimates of trans people across the country should mean that may include anywhere from 5000-26,000 trans athletes. Yet in 2024, there are only 10 openly



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trans athletes in the nation, and we have seen only 3 openly trans champions in the history of the NCAA.

What is true is how damaging HB 156 is to Maryland's kids. This bill fundamentally misinterprets why these kids want to play sports, including building community and friendships, and learning how to work on a team. Participating in sports teaches important values like perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork. We should want more young people to play sports, not put up more barriers for children that subject them to invasive interrogation or make them risk public ridicule in order to join a sports team.

Lastly, in this terrifying moment of continued and escalating attacks across the country to the rights, healthcare, and inclusion of trans people, the General Assembly should be more steadfast than ever in upholding antidiscrimination protections for this vulnerable group of young people. This misguided and cruel bill does the opposite to trans children just trying to exist alongside their peers and who like all of Maryland's children deserve to thrive.

For all the reasons, we strongly urge against supporting HB 156.

Sincerely,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition