



The Honorable Chair
Senator Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 0050
Education - Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams and Sports -
Designation (Fairness in Girls' Sports Act)**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition writes in **strong opposition to Senate Bill 0050**, which would prohibit transgender girls from participating in girls' high school sports. This bill does not protect girls. It increases harm by encouraging suspicion, stigma, and invasive surveillance that places all girls at greater risk. Policies like SB0050 isolate vulnerable youth and undermine the supportive environments that protect their health and wellbeing.

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition provides public health harm reduction services across the state, including gender-affirming care and resources for transgender and nonbinary Marylanders. Many of our participants have experienced homelessness, employment discrimination, violence, and systemic barriers to care. These harms were not inevitable. They were the result of stigma, discrimination, and exclusion from safe, affirming environments. Harm reduction focuses on improving health and safety by reducing predictable and preventable harms. **SB0050 would directly and predictably cause harm to transgender youth and to all girls playing sports.**

School sports are a well-established protective factor for youth.¹ Participation provides structure, mentorship, peer support, and a sense of belonging. These are directly linked to improved mental health, stronger school engagement, and reduced risk of isolation and self harm. Excluding transgender girls removes these protections and increases stigma and isolation. When young people are pushed out of supportive environments, they predictably face greater risks to their physical and mental health.^{2,3}

This bill would also expose all girls (both cisgender and transgender) to increased harm by encouraging gender policing and false accusations against students who do not conform to gender stereotypes. These policies create an environment where young people's bodies are treated with suspicion and where scrutiny can result in invasive examinations, increasing the risk of abuse and exploitation by adults in positions of authority. These harms fall disproportionately on Black girls and girls of color.⁴ Racism and gender discrimination have long subjected Black girls to greater policing and objectification. Policies that encourage gender surveillance will predictably expose Black girls and girls of color, both transgender and cisgender, to higher rates of harassment, exclusion, and harm.

At its core, this bill increases stigma, isolation, and surveillance. Stigma is a health risk; isolation breeds exploitation; surveillance corrodes safety. Those conditions are well documented drivers of depression, school disengagement, substance use vulnerability, and long-term instability. Maryland has the opportunity to protect all girls by fostering safe, inclusive school environments that prioritize connection, dignity, and evidence-based policy. **Exclusion and body policing do not reduce harm. They create it.**

For these reasons and many more, **we respectfully urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to give SB0050 an unfavorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Darci Curwen-Garber, BHRC Policy Manager, at darci@baltimoreharmreduction.org.

Sincerely,

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC)

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1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth*. 2021.
2. Tordoff DM, Wanta JW, Collin A, Stepney C, Inwards-Breland DJ, Ahrens K. *Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care*. JAMA Network Open. 2022;5(2):e220978.
3. The Trevor Project. *2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People*.
4. Human Rights Watch. *"They're Chasing Us Away from Sport": Human Rights Violations in Sex Testing of Elite Women Athletes*. 2020.