

IN OPPOSITION TO Senate Bill 50: Education - Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Sports - Designation Based on Sex (Fairness in Girls' Sports Act)

To Chairperson Feldman, Vice Chairperson Kagan and members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

I strongly oppose SB 50 because it is unnecessary and harmful to youth. I urge you to give it an unfavorable report.

My niece is a 23-year-old athlete who has participated in high school and college sports such as rugby, basketball, and softball. When considering my reactions to SB 50, I asked her what it was like to play with trans girls on female sports teams. Interestingly, she emphasized the many benefits of playing on inclusive teams where all gender identities are accepted. For example, she saw no significant difference in the players' athletic ability or physical strength related to gender identity when she played college rugby. Gender identity simply did not matter. What mattered were things like showing up for practice, being dedicated to playing well and supporting everyone on the team. My niece loved playing on inclusive teams where all players were accepted for who they were. This created a sense of belonging for all and assurance that everyone was valued. Playing with trans girls was not uncomfortable or harmful to her in any way. Her first-hand experience defies the notion that cisgender girls require protection from trans girls and that we need a "Fairness in Girls' Sports" Act.

Trans youth across the country are under attack. We cannot allow Maryland to join this trend. I am disturbed that elected officials from Maryland are sponsoring legislation targeting trans girls. Trans youth are experiencing enormous stress due to hate, bigotry and disinformation. We should not add to this burden by preventing trans girls from playing sports on girls' teams. Exclusionary policies increase their stress and hinder their well-being; this is immoral and simply wrong. Trans athletes deserve to have all the physical and emotional benefits of playing sports just like any other child.

Policy and laws must be based on facts, not fear. As a psychologist, I urge you to consider statements in regards to trans athletes made by reputable health organizations. The [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) strongly supports the full inclusion of transgender girls in sports, asserting that restrictive policies are discriminatory, harm mental health, and deny the well-established benefits of athletic participation. The APA contends that requiring transgender youth to compete based on their sex assigned at birth is psychologically harmful, reinforces stigma, and correlates with negative mental health outcomes. This position is supported by many other organizations, including the [Association for Applied Sport Psychology \(AASP\)](#) and the [American Medical Association \(AMA\)](#). In addition, gender identity is a protected class in Maryland and our public schools are prohibited from discriminating against transgender

students. SB 50 would make Maryland noncompliant with this protection, as well as **contradicting MPSSA policy and MSDE Non-Discrimination Guidelines.**

We do not have a problem with trans girls playing sports; SB 50 seeks to manufacture a problem where none exists. In many states including Maryland, athletic organizations and governing bodies have successfully balanced fairness, inclusion, and access to play. There are very few trans girls who participate on girls' sports teams and those that do pose no threat whatsoever. Banning them from girls' teams means they will not play sports at all. The sponsors of SB 50 are promoting harmful stereotypes and disinformation that endanger vulnerable youth.

Trans children are under attack; please do not collude with their attackers.

I urge you to give an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 50.

Sincerely,

Abbie Ellicott, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist
Severna Park, MD 21146