

Let Kids Play – An Open Letter to Indiana Legislators

Indiana legislators are attempting to ban transgender girls from school sports. The bill, HB 1041, singles out trans girls, banning them from participating in girls' sports, ultimately jeopardizing their mental health, physical well-being and ability to access educational opportunities comparable to their peers.

Simply introducing anti-trans legislation like HB 1041 is detrimental to the well-being of transgender kids. 85% of transgender and non-binary youth report that constant political attacks on them [have had a negative impact on their mental health](#), according to recent Trevor Project data. If passed, this bill would send a message to vulnerable transgender youth that they are not worthy of the same kinds of opportunities as their classmates.

In their opposition to this bill, the Indiana chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics notes that, for trans youth, “A sports team can often be where they experience a sense of community and inclusion that may otherwise be missing in their lives... Taking that opportunity away not only deprives transgender youth of the benefits sports hold for all kids, but also takes away critical avenues to buffering negative mental health effects.”

So why are some legislators pushing for a bill that causes such harm to trans youth?

When one trans athlete succeeds, her success is often highly publicized and politicized to the point of suggesting that the only reason for the athlete's success is the fact that the person is trans, and that all trans people are inherently better athletes. Neither is true. The fact that an occasional trans person succeeds in sport should not be used to exclude all trans athletes.

Because allowing trans girls to compete in girls' sports doesn't hurt anyone, advocates for women and girls in sports such as [the National Women's Law Center, the Women's Sports Foundation, Women Leaders in College Sports, and others](#) support trans-inclusive policies and oppose efforts to exclude transgender students from participating in sports.

When misinformation about biology and gender is used to bar transgender girls from sports it amounts to the same form of sex discrimination that has long been prohibited under Title IX, a law that protects all students – including trans people – on the basis of sex. Courts recently blocked similar laws from taking effect in Idaho and West Virginia.

But still, HB 1041 should come as no surprise. After years of focusing on restrooms and locker rooms, opponents of LGBTQ equality have shifted strategy to focus on excluding trans youth from activities that affirm their sense of self, including athletics. Trans students participate in sports for the same reasons other young people do: to challenge themselves, improve fitness, and be part of a team. Legislators should not take away this opportunity for trans kids to be kids. Let kids play.

In every state and every community — trans people belong. We must fight back against this discriminatory bill to make sure all kids can participate fully with their peers.

Sincerely,

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