

## **Lisa Cataldi**

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**From:** Hayden McDermott <hmmcd97@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 21, 2025 11:18 PM  
**To:** House Education Committee  
**Subject:** Opposition to H5842 "Fairness in Women's Sports Act"

Dear RI House Education Committee,

My name is Hayden McDermott. I am a transgender Rhode Islander, and I am writing to you in opposition of H5842.

It is incredibly disheartening to see this kind of transphobic, ignorant, and factually incorrect legislation proposed in my home state. Across the country, [over 850 anti-LGBTQ bills have been filed in 2025 alone](#), the most of any year on record, and yet we are only a quarter of the way into the year. Rhode Island is clearly not immune to the hateful rhetoric that is sweeping the country.

My community is about 1% of the population. Out of 510,000 collegiate NCAA athletes across the nation, [less than 10 of them are transgender](#). Trans women participating in sports is a rare non-issue. I am sick of the witch hunt, sick of the fear mongering, and sick of being made a political pawn. It was honestly easier being a transgender student as someone who graduated high school in 2016, back when barely anyone knew we existed. All trans students want is to be left alone to live normal lives.

The fear of being unable to participate in gender-segregated sports contributed to my waiting to fully come out as trans until I was in college, even though waiting so long was detrimental to my wellbeing. In high school, sports provided an emotional and physical outlet, structure, and most importantly friends and community in a time when I desperately needed it. Sports are a lifeline that all students deserve access to.

Although many of my friends are also transgender, few of them are athletes or continued sports after coming out due to fear of harassment and discriminatory policies. In college, I did know one transfeminine athlete, Jaylin, who competed in cross country, and the idea of someone being afraid of her was honestly laughable. I watched as she took estrogen and hormone blockers for a year before she could join, her already scant muscles on her thin 5'7" frame receding over the months as HRT did its work. Once her blood tests showed her testosterone levels were the same level as cis women, she was ecstatic and was able to join. She was good enough to make the team, but in all honesty not great or especially talented. But most importantly she was happy, her academics improved, and she found community among her teammates. It's only when trans people happen to be talented that people vilify our transness instead of recognizing trans athletes' hard work.

Trans kids and students belong in all aspects of our communities. Let trans kids be kids and play.

Sincerely,  
Hayden

Hayden McDermott (he/they)  
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