

April 22, 2025
Representative Joseph M. McNamara
Chair, House Committee on Education
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
RE: Letter of Opposition for HB5842

Chair McNamara,

I write to offer my strong opposition to HB5842: An Act Relating To Education -- Fairness In Women's Sports Act, a cruel and perverse bill which fundamentally misunderstands both the biology of trans individuals and the goal of school athletics.

First, the Fairness in Women's Sports Act is a misguided "solution" in search of a problem. According to the Harvard Crimson, "Out of the more than 500,000 athletes that compete in the National Collegiate Athletic Association, an estimated 40 are trans. That's less than 0.008 percent." Were any other group as small as trans student athletes the subject of a bill like this, it would be quickly written off as a waste of time.

Second, the Fairness in Women's Sports Act is poorly written. It states that athletic teams designated for females shall not be open to members of the male sex, and that "if disputed, a student may establish sex by presenting a signed physician's statement" attesting to their genetic makeup. However, without any procedures in place for measuring the merits of a dispute, it leaves the door open for anyone's sex to be challenged at any given time. *A student outperforms my child at the track meet? Well, it must be because they're trans!* Competitive advantages exist outside of the gender binary. Female athletes with the means to hire a private trainer will perform better than those who don't. But this bill doesn't address that because it is clearly more interested in demonizing young trans people than it is in actually addressing systemic gender disparities in athletics, a very real and persistent problem.

Furthermore, at a time when Rhode Island school athletic coaches are being brought to trial for conducting so-called "fat tests," the makers of this bill deem it appropriate to force student athletes at the most vulnerable part of their development to submit proof of "the student's internal and external reproductive anatomy." It is deeply concerning that members of the General Assembly are so preoccupied with the genitals of student athletes instead of addressing real issues impacting female athletes, such as inequitable practice and changing spaces, disparate resources, and unequal access to playing fields.

This bill was previously introduced to the Rhode Island legislature and was rightfully voted down. I hope that the General Assembly again makes the right decision and opposes this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jacob H. deBlecourt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Jacob deBlecourt