

Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
House Education Committee
HouseEducation@rilegislature.gov

Re: Against Bill H5842, Fairness in Women's sports Act

Dear Representatives Roberts, Quattrocchi, and J. Brien

My name is Reverend DL Helfer, LCSW and I am a resident of Providence, Rhode Island. I am an ordained clergy person and a licensed social worker. I am also and out and proud transgender individual. I write from all of those identities.

This proposed law is cruel, and worse, intentionally so.

We know biology, our understanding of biology, changes over time. Even the way you and I learned about X and Y chromosomes in high school biology, that understanding has changed, been clarified, over time.

So, to hide behind science as the rationale for this punitive bill is dishonest.

This bill seeks to punish students who are transgender, to shame them into further isolation by disallowing them in school-sponsored sports.

I'll tell you, when I was young, and then female bodied, I played every sport I could. Lacrosse, soccer, you name it, I played it. And I'll tell you why – because for me, as with so many others, high school sports is a safe alternative to difficult and sometimes dangerous lives at home.

It was where we learned to understand and accept ourselves and each other.

To take that away is to take away one more vestige of safety for LGBTQIA+ youth.

If I could go back to young me, I would have insisted on playing football, my longing of my youth. I was told, "girls can't play" and I accepted that painful and ridiculous excuse. Our youth now know better. It isn't gender, it isn't x or y chromosomes, it isn't the level of testosterone that is the defining factor in youth sports.

It's the camaraderie, the learning to work together, the bonding, far beyond any winning or losing. We tell youth to not care who wins, that it's about learning to work together. If we believe that, then more or lesser strength in a body is irrelevant.

I could not oppose this bill more strongly. May you not be free to shame yet another generation of youth, may you be unable to deny them the basic lessons of team sports, that we belong to each other.

I implore you all to vote no on 5842.

Best,
Rev. DL Helfer, LCSW