

April 23, 2025

Dear Chair McNamara and members of the House Committee on Education:

I am a faculty member in the social work program at RI College and the parent of a trans adult. I am writing in opposition to H 5842 that would ban transgender athletes from participating in girls' sports.

This bill is part of a national campaign to stigmatize, shame, and eliminate trans people. It attempts to solve a problem that doesn't exist relying on a handful of rare, highly publicized cases of elite transgender athletes. Let's be honest: there are virtually no Rhode Island schools struggling with elite trans athletes dominating sports or harming other girls. Yet this legislation treats a theoretical scenario as if it's a widespread crisis. That's not good governance—that's scapegoating – and it is harmful to our youth. We know that every piece of anti-trans legislation makes trans kids more likely to experience depression and anxiety – there is a cost to this kind of shaming.

RI has a small number of trans kids who just want to play; they want to be part of a team, want to belong, want to have fun with friends. When we try to create policy that denies this, we don't create fairness—we create exclusion.

This bill will not protect girls' sports—it will weaponize them. It sends a chilling message to trans youth that they are not welcome as their authentic selves and their presence is harmful to others. There should be no doubt, that is exactly the intent.

I have been an athlete my whole life and care deeply about women's sports. As a teenage athlete, I fought for the implementation of Title IX. I have played and coached girls in multiple sports. I understand the power of playing on a team, of winning *and* losing, of feeling proud, of being humbled. I know how profoundly important it is that kids who want to play, can play, without hiding who they are to do so.

This bill is being introduced because a portion of our population is uncomfortable with trans people. The conservative right has not instantly developed an intense concern over women's sports or women's equality. Rhode Island is better than this. Please reject legislation that makes trans kids feel ashamed of who they are just to score points with people comfortable using them as political pawns.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Wendy Becker, PhD, LICSW

