

February 21, 2021

Lindsay Vaughn
Keaton Vaughn
Kansas Legislature
District 22

To the Kansas Legislature,

I am writing today on behalf of myself, my children and others; I am writing today as a mother of four children, as an athlete, former high school track and field coach, and advocate of transgender persons, specifically today trans female athletes.

Over the past week, I was made aware that the Kansas Legislature is proposing a bill that would prevent trans female athletes from competing at the middle school and high school level. I am deeply concerned on a variety of levels on the impact that this bill would have on the youth in our state and in Missouri as well.

Before I state the reasons why this is wrong on a basic civil rights level, I would like to share with you a little of the history of female athletics and competition in our country and world.

Did you know at the 1936 Olympics, the Nazis demanded the genital inspection of an American athlete? Helen Stephens, a Missourian, was subjected to this humiliation by the Nazi party because they could not believe a woman could run so fast. The Nazi logic was: she trained primarily with men, so there must be something amiss. This is the same Nazi party who's dogma also said that said Negroes, African Americans like Jesse Owens were "sub-human" and who preached Eugenics. Interestingly enough, at the same 1936 games, a German athlete Dora Ratjen competed as a high jumper for the Nazi party and came in fourth against other women. Ratjen later was later able to live as his true male gender identity and was known as Heinrich Ratjen.

Today, you would like to define what makes someone male or female, but what if there is no clear cut answer? Should we analyze the male and female species at such an extent, as the Nazi party did, to create *whose* ideal athlete? In fact, maybe we should define what being an athlete means? Do we compete to win or for the camaraderie of the sport? When I run a 5k or 10k or half-marathon and have bested other men, should this define me as male or female? We become better as a team of people, embracing others, accepting others for who they are, demonstrating through athletics, as we do in life, compassion and empathy. If I do otherwise, what am I teaching my children?

I have four children all of whom were identified as male at birth. My youngest often chooses clothing that is not stereotypically male. We leave plenty of room for them to discover what their true gender identity is. And when they are in middle school or high school I would like them to be able to compete in sports as their true gender identity.

What truly are you hoping to accomplish by your bill? Anxiety and stress of those athletes who deserve our compassion and encouragement?

As a former coach, I have watched many athletes and their successes and failure. I will honestly say that while there are wins to be remembered, many of the young people would most likely say that what they enjoyed the most were the friendships.

Helen Stephens, when asked later in life what she recalled most about her Olympic Games, said it was the friendships she had made and the feeling that she finally belonged. One of those the life-long one she had with Stella Walsh, her fiercest competitor.

Before you consider dehumanizing someone based on their gender identity- consider how you show humanity toward your fellow peers in this statehouse, humanity toward those in your

community, humanity toward other athletes who desire compassion, empathy and encouragement.

Sincerely,

Anne Gagel
KS Resident, Johnson County
Former Coach, North KS City High School