

Laura Wiltanger
Opposition Testimony on SB208
Kansas Senate Education Committee
Hearing date 2/23/2021, 1:30pm

February 22, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to oppose Senate Bill 208, Fairness in Women's Sports. To begin, your language is outdated. You indicate in the text of the bill that participation on women's teams should be restricted to "female students." Transgender females are female. Advocates working against stigma, harassment, and discrimination for transgender women support this. As an educator, I am working against antiquated language and toward understanding the nuances of the LGBTQIA community. I am hopeful that as legislators you would consider the same.

Beyond the initial semantics barrier, your bill is at a dangerous crossroads where equitable access to sports, human rights, and athletic advantages meet. Young adults grappling with gender identity deserve just as much to be provided with opportunities as their cisgender peers. This includes, but is not limited to, sports. In fact, youth in the LGBTQIA community are almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide than heterosexual youth. Accessibility to community can serve as a support network of acceptance for these young people.

Going forward, it would be helpful to search for a better balance. Currently, your bill completely excludes transgender young women from competition in sports. Seventeen other states have adopted a policy similar to that of the NCAA. The NCAA allows trans girls and women to compete after taking gender-affirming hormones for a year. Finding a balance such as this instead of completely excluding transgender young women from competition would be a much more humane place to land.

In conclusion, please vote no on this bill. You have not carefully considered current language in references to transgender youth. In addition, you have made no attempt to find middle ground between protecting girls' and womens' competitive categories while accepting accommodations for trans athletes to participate in sports. As an educator, I understand the importance of positive mental health for young people. All groups need to find community and acceptance. This bill opposes positive mental health. I will stress again: please vote no.

Yours truly,
Laura Wiltanger

Brassil, Gillian R., and Jeré Longman. "Who Should Compete in Women's Sports? There Are 'Two Almost Irreconcilable Positions'." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 18 Aug. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/08/18/sports/transgender-athletes-womens-sports-idaho.html.

Brennan, Christine. "Sports Leaders Seek to Protect Women's Sports While Accommodating Transgender Girls and Women." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 1 Feb. 2021, www.usatoday.com/story/sports/2021/02/01/group-protect-womens-sports-accommodate-transgender-athletes/4345854001/.

"Facts About Suicide." *The Trevor Project*, 20 Sept. 2017, www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/preventing-suicide/facts-about-suicide/.