

Hello,

This week, a group of Republican Representatives have unveiled cookie cutter legislation to bar transgender student-athletes from playing sports. While this legislation might seem to only directly affect a small number of people, the discourse around a person's fundamental human rights has a real and dangerous impact on the mental health of our commonwealth's LGBTQ young people.

Below is some helpful information about transgender youth and sports.

PA LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus

Lawmakers are legislating against a made-up problem.

- When the lawmakers who are proposing these anti-trans bills are challenged to name [any examples of transgender women](#) in their states cheating to gain a competitive advantage, they can't name a single instance, arguing that it's about protecting women's sports.
- Targeting transgender kids and excluding them from competition is not protecting women's sports from anything — they have been playing and competing, and it has not been a problem when it occurs in real life.

Transgender girls have been competing without incident.

- Transgender athletes have been playing sports for years, and the idea that this is now becoming a problem that needs to be legislated is preposterous.
- Collegiate and professional athletic associations have had trans-inclusive policies for years, and despite that, there is no such thing as "dominance" by transgender athletes.
- Further than that, the idea that any kid would endure the social challenges of being out and transgender in elementary, middle, or high school, just to gain an advantage in sports is absurd. The medical treatment and doctor visits that go along with transitioning make that sort of decision nonsensical and impractical.

Sports are a lesson-learning and developmental experience for kids.

- Requiring transgender youth to athletically compete in a manner conforming with their assigned sex at birth is the same as banning them from athletic competition entirely.
- Denying the opportunity for them to grow, develop, play and learn with other kids is not only important for any child's development, it's a social opportunity from which they would be excluded.
- Incidence of hatred, exclusion and discrimination decrease just from people *knowing* a transgender kid, and sports are one of many opportunities for cisgender kids to meet them and realize that transgender kids are simply kids just like them.
- While the GOP paints transgender youth as threatening to other children, the reality is that they are one of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable groups of people. They are at a high risk of depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation, and those risks are [magnified](#) in children whose gender identity is not affirmed early on. Transgender people also are subject to discrimination and high rates of domestic and sexual violence and [staggering amounts of hate crimes](#).
- Refusing to let trans kids play also can lead to outing a trans kid, a traumatizing experience that would be illegal and certainly unethical under medical privacy laws.

This is the latest in the failed fight against equality, grasping for a culture war and wedge issue.

- A similar bill signed into law in Idaho brought immediate legal action from civil rights groups, because laws that bar children and adults from participating in sports because of their gender are, on their face, unconstitutional.
- This is the same bogus political fight that we've seen some try to wage for years: first with attacking marriage equality, then bathroom bills, and now transgender sports participation. None of these arguments is made in good faith or fairness.
- Simply put, this unnecessary bill and the debate surrounding it are concocted by opponents of equality, who are waging a culture war by creating a wedge issue.
- It is a losing fight, as marriage equality is now the law of the land, bathroom bills have been repealed — and they will lose this fight, too.
- The bills that we're fighting were not written by state legislators, but copied and pasted from extremist anti-equality groups who are pushing these bills across and down to the states, including one group, the Alliance Defending Freedom, that has been deemed a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Because allowing trans girls to compete in girls' sports doesn't hurt anyone, advocates for women and girls in sports — such as the National Women's Law Center, the Women's Sports Foundation, Women Leaders in College Sports, and others — support trans-inclusive policies and oppose efforts to exclude transgender students from participating in sports.