

Comment Report

Education

Date: 02/14/2022

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: RM 102, Sup. Ct. Consult

Name: Chris Morse

Comment: It is appalling that this transphobic bill has once again been proposed and considered by this body. There are a number of arguments that could be made against this bill including that it is discriminatory, unwelcoming, and downright hateful. To say this bill is needed to protect girls fails to properly acknowledge that trans girls are girls and that trans women are women. Additionally, this legislation does nothing to prepare our children for the future. More than 1 and 1/2 million Americans identify as trans. By teaching children that trans individuals should be treated differently than cisgendered individuals we are telling our children. That discrimination is okay. Meanwhile, the rest of the society is embracing diversity and inclusion. In the fall of 2021, The West Des Moines Soccer Club was home to what I believe was the first gender expansive team in Central Iowa. On this team there were no incidents even remotely close to the horrors that this bills proponents would have you imagine could happen. Lastly, this legislation would be a major step backwards for our current protections for gender nonconforming individuals. Please got no on this bill and do not allow it to move any further in the process.

Name: Ysandrill Morrigan

Comment: This bill is discrimination pure and simple. It is based in ignorance, bigotry and hate. It harms children. CHILDREN. It should never have been advanced and it needs to end. Iowa should be safe for ALL families. Transgender rights are human rights.

Name: Martha Shaw

Comment: I strongly OPPOSE HF 2309. This bill is based on misinformation and not facts. This country has a long history of excluding people from sports based on the premise that it will ruin them. We all know the history of Black and Brown athletes being banned from professional sports. Did you watch the Super Bowl yesterday? Seventy percent of NFL players are Black or Brown. Women were banned from sports programs. Gay players have been excluded. Has nothing been learned from that history? The number of trans girls and women is extremely small, and they come to their sports with all types of skill levels, body types, etc. There is no scientific evidence supporting the myth that they pose a threat to cisgender females. Please read from Scientific American: Trans Girls Belong on Girls Sports Teams <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/transgirlsbelongongirlssportsteams/> This bill will hurt children, and it will hurt Iowa.

Name: Oliver Bardwell

Comment: Please pass this bill. Its heartbreaking for a young woman to dedicate her whole life to a sport only to be beaten easily by a biological male. Men, as a whole, are biologically stronger and faster than women no matter which gender they associate with. That's why we separate the genders in physical competition. This bill being passed will be a wonderful step in restoring fairness and balance to our women's sports in Iowa.

Name: Jessica Sidler

Comment: I am opposed to HF 2309 because trans girls are girls. They are not boys and they are not an "other" that should be excluded. Iowa trans girls have been participating in

high school sports for the past 15 years, this bill is discriminatory and harmful. Trans girls make up a tiny percentage of the population, 2% of high school students identify as transgender, according to the CDC. That means that approximately 1% of any given school would be comprised of transgender girls, who may or may not choose to participate in sports. Athletes come to their sports with a variety of talent, body sizes, physical advantages or disadvantages, genetic makeup, and mental drive. We do not exclude children from sports because of their body traits. Scientific American recently published a piece about the myth of transgender girls taking over girls' sport; "Trans Girls Belong on Girls' Sports Teams: There Is No Scientific Case for Excluding Them."

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/transgirlsbelongongirlssportsteams/Read it>.

Name: Kathranne Knight

Comment: I write in opposition of HF 2309. It singles out some children to be shut out of participating in sports in their school as they grow and learn who they are and how they fit into our society. To play as a member of a team, learn good sportsmanship, exercise one's body and mind is a right every child in Iowa ought to enjoy. A trans child IS the gender they say they are and it is a fundamental misunderstanding of their life not to recognize and honor it. Is it more important that kids adhere to gender structures assigned from without or that kids learn to be a part of a society that works together as a team, builds healthy habits, enjoys play, and hard work? Let's focus on our children as good HUMANS. Frankly, our teachers need better salaries, benefits and support. This bill is a gross targeting of already vulnerable children, rather than a solution to what is truly ailing public education in Iowa.

Name: Diana Wright

Comment: HF 2309 I am writing to oppose this bill. As a physician, I am telling you this is not based on science or any reality, but purely on prejudice. Trans girls should have the right to compete in sports just as any other girl!! Support of this bill shows a lack of knowledge about how hormonal therapy works and indicates a shameful bias. Base laws on facts and needs, not prejudice.

Name: Jenna Marsh

Comment: Vote no on HF 2309! This is a cruel divisive discriminatory transphobic bill based on nothing but lies and misinformation and will traumatize trans kids. This is clear bullying and needs to stop!

Name: Leslie Beck

Comment: I support this bill. Girls should be able to compete against only other biological girls and not against other biological boys. God did not create men and women with the same physical abilities. If he had, we would not have needed to create girls sports in the first place. Allow our girls to compete on a level playing field. #savegirlssports

Name: Kayla P

Comment: Please pass this bill. Our daughters deserve to have their own space to excel in athletically. The reality is that biological males do in fact have physical advantages over those born female and taking spaces designed for the girls takes them out of the running many times for future opportunities and scholarships. If this were not true, why do some of these trans athletes not exceed in the male category but then are all of a sudden superior when they transition to the female category? It is not "transphobic" to say that those born female deserve to have spaces designed specifically for them and shouldn't have to share them with those born male. If there needs to be a trans only athletics division than so be it. As Girls have long and hard fought for the spaces they now have, how is telling them they need to now take a backseat fair to them?

Name: Jenn Turner

Comment: I support this bill. Protect Girls Sports. Watch the news around the country! Girls are losing opportunities to biological males. Stand up for our children.

Name: Mandy Gilbert

Comment: Please support this bill to protect biological females in sports. This bill does not exclude anyone participating in school sports, it merely creates an equal opportunity for girls to compete fairly with other females. Women should not compete against men in a womens sport. Thank you for supporting and protecting female athletes.

Name: Michelle Veach

Comment: I am in support of HF209. Biological Girls must be protected with this bill. My 13 daughter cannot compete against a biological male and win. Biological girls must compete only against biological girls. If our daughters are forced to compete against biological males, they will not have any reason to try, or compete. The result will be depression, loss of competitive drive and ultimately all sports records and scholarships will be held by biological males. Locker rooms will not be safe for girls. Please protect our daughters in Iowa.

Name: Darin Bergmann

Comment: I fully and 100% support this bill. Science tells us the genes DNA make up of a biological female are different than those of a male! This has absolutely nothing to do with "discrimination". Why should a person who is stronger biologically be able to compete in girls sports just because they feel different and feel like they are a male. Its ridiculous to even think this way. This legislature NEEDS to be passed. It's a very slippery slope. Do what's right and what science says to not allow transgender females to compete in female sports!

Name: Amber Williams

Comment: I strongly support this bill. As a former female athlete myself, I cannot imagine how different my path and success would have been had I been forced to compete with males who were stronger, faster and biologically physically superior. Consider the safety of our female athletes.

Name: Roxanne McGee

Comment: I support this bill. Having biological men compete against biological women will singlehandedly wipe away the progress and work that went into making women's sports what they are today. Talented and skilled women athletes are missing out on opportunities and achievements because they are competing against somebody who is naturally built to be faster and stronger. Passing this bill also protects women's safety. Women's wrestling is now a sanctioned sport. It isn't safe for a woman to wrestle a biological male. There is a same issue of concern with women's boxing.

Name: John Clark

Comment: I support passage of HF 2309 and encourage you to vote for it. The science does not back the opinion that trans girls are girls and our female athletes need the protection of this legislation.

Name: Chad Veach

Comment: I support HF 2309, to protect the competitive nature of girls sports through participation eligibility requirements, so that biological boys are restricted from competing in athletic competition intended for girls.

Name: Judah Richardson

Comment: As a longtime sports (football, basketball, baseball, hockey, soccer) fan, it's important to me that Iowa has the best people on the field. Their identity does not and should not matter. Fielding the best ensures we remain competitive on the collegiate, K12 school, and national recruiting fronts. Keep Iowa on the country's

sports map. Allow all kids to play, regardless of gender identity.

Name: Judah Richardson

Comment: I oppose HF2309, by the way. I forgot to mention that in my previous comment.

Name: Donna Mitchell

Comment: Trans girls are girls and belong in girls sports. There is no proof that trans girls have an unfair advantage in sports. This is just a hateful talking point to spread transphobia. Iowa is better than this. Do not pass HF 2309. It is shameful and discriminatory!

Name: Kailey Gee

Comment: As a trans student, I am opposed to HF 2309. This will negatively affect the mental health of me and my peers, as well as trans people throughout the community. Please just have some empathy. Please don't do this.
<https://wsspapier.com/65052/sports/beyondthebinary/>

Name: Melissa Sternhagen

Comment: February 14, 2022 To the Members of the Iowa House Education Committee: I am a called and ordained clergy person in the United Church of Christ. I am also a responsible adult. As such, I take seriously the call to protect and advocate for the most vulnerable among us. I am reminded of how the writer of Psalm 82 calls God to "defend the weak and the parentless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Certainly such a call is not simply meant to concern God alone. It is meant to be a concern of God's people as well. To be sure, our sacred texts speak plainly about the way in which we are to treat one another. We are to love one another as ourselves, we are to recognize the image of the Divine in one another, and we are to protect the most vulnerable among us. Our trans and nonbinary youth are some of the most vulnerable among us in the state of Iowa and in the U.S. I am writing in hope that you will join me in protecting them from the damaging details and provisions that comprise HF2309. According to January 2022 data from The Trevor Project, 85% of trans and nonbinary youth reported that following recent news about issues that impact the transgender community has negatively impacted their mental health. If it is true that participation in sports can and does have a positive impact on the self-esteem and mental health of young people, why would the focus be on limiting or eliminating participation for such a vulnerable population? Trans and nonbinary youth are effectively denied the opportunity to participate in school sports at all just as soon as you deny them the opportunity to play on sports teams that align with their gender identity. Which, of course, means that they are also denied the positive impacts mentioned above. Meanwhile, cisgender youth continue to enjoy the positive impacts of participation in sports. HF2309 not only damages the most vulnerable among us, it actually seeks to foot the bill for any "lawsuit or complaint and incurred by an accredited nonpublic school, a school district, or an employee, board of directors member, or a member of the authorities in charge of a nonpublic school, including any award for attorney fees and costs for which that entity or individual would be otherwise responsible." In other words, this bill offers state-sanctioned discrimination on the basis of sex, as discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is, as US Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in 2020, "necessarily bound up with discrimination on the basis of sex." But beyond all of the legalities and the quoted scripture, one thing remains sure: For generations we have been discriminating against vulnerable and marginalized people, and for generations we have been getting it wrong. First it was preventing Black people from full participation in sports, then it was women, and then it was gay and lesbian athletes. We continue to be content to discriminate and damage the most vulnerable among us based on a fear or a lack of understanding of the differences that exist in humanity as well as the notion that difference, when included, spoils the experience for others. My siblings in Christ, this cannot continue to be so. As a pastor, as a responsible adult, and as a fellow human being, I implore this House Education committee to focus its attention on Iowa's slipping educational ranking and its underfunded public schools. I implore this committee to remember the call to love one another as you love yourselves. I implore you to protect some of the most vulnerable among us, our trans and nonbinary youth, by refusing to send HF2309 beyond your committee for a vote. Sincerely, Rev. Melissa R. Sternhagen
Pastor, St. Paul Congregational United Church of Christ
Oskaloosa, IA

February 14, 2022

To the Members of the Iowa House Education Committee:

I am a called and ordained clergy person in the United Church of Christ. I am also a responsible adult. As such, I take seriously the call to protect and advocate for the most vulnerable among us. I am reminded of how the writer of Psalm 82 calls God to "defend the weak and the parentless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed." Certainly such a call is not simply meant to concern God alone. It is meant to be a concern of God's people as well.

To be sure, our sacred texts speak plainly about the way in which we are to treat one another. We are to love one another as ourselves, we are to recognize the image of the Divine in one another, and we are to protect the most vulnerable among us. Our trans and non-binary youth are some of the most vulnerable amongs us in the state of Iowa and in the U.S. I am writing in hope that you will join me in protecting them from the damaging details and provisions that comprise HF2309.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Melissa R. Sternhagen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Melissa R. Sternhagen
Pastor, St. Paul Congregational United Church of Christ
Oskaloosa, IA