

Athletics: Transgender Youth Participation in Sports

Contact:

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Bills PROMO Opposes

- SB 503, HJR 53, HJR 56, HB 1045, HB 1077, and HB 1184

The Value of Athletic Participation

- Kids learn a lot of important lessons in sports: sportsmanship, leadership, confidence, self-discipline, self-respect, and what it means to be part of a team.
We know that youth sports often play a significant role in kids' lives and development. Nearly 7 in 10 (69.1%) young people between the ages of 6-12 participate in some form of sport.
- Transgender kids, like other students, deserve the same chances to learn teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership and self-discipline, and to build a sense of belonging with their peers. When we tell transgender girls that they can't play girls' sports—or transgender boys that they can't play boys' sports—they miss out on this important childhood experience and all the lessons it teaches.

Exclusion Harms Students

- Schools across the country know that transgender students, like any student, thrive when they are treated with dignity and respect. School officials shouldn't treat a transgender female student as a girl between 8AM-3PM and then treat her like she's a boy when sports practice starts. It's deeply hurtful to the student and disrupts schools' policy of treating all kids fairly.
- The majority of transgender athletes, like non-transgender athletes, never make it to an elite level and just want to play for fun with their friends. Everyone's body is different, and we have no evidence that the average transgender girl is bigger, stronger, or faster than other girls.
- When transgender athletes are excluded from teams that align with their gender identity, they are often excluded from sports altogether.

LGBT Missourians and Discrimination

- As Missourians, we value individual liberty, personal freedom, and the right to live life free of government overreach. Putting these restrictions in statute would be incredibly harmful. They are nearly impossible to enforce and represent an overreach in government.
- As a nation, we decided long ago that discrimination is wrong and that everyone should have the same opportunities to participate — that should include transgender youth. We can celebrate girls' sports and protect transgender youth from discrimination, making sure that all young people can access the lessons and opportunities that sports afford.

How Are Schools Accommodating Transgender Athletes Now?

- Missouri State High School Activities Association has established policies for transgender athletes to play on teams as the gender they know themselves to be: <http://bit.ly/mshsaa> (page 142)
- NCAA has had inclusive and fair policies that allow transgender men and women to fully participate in sports with full dignity and respect as the gender they are: <http://bit.ly/ncaahandbook>
- 20 states covering thousands of school districts across the U.S. have athletic inclusion policies that allow transgender youth athletes to participate alongside their peers: <https://www.transathlete.com/k-12>

Action in Other States

- 17 states that have passed legislation that expressly allows and supports the full inclusion of transgender youth on sports teams according to their gender. Policies that single out transgender students from sports inevitably are policies that isolate transgender youth from participating in the entire school experience with peers and friends.

PROMO is Missouri's statewide organization advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) equality through legislative action, electoral politics, grassroots organizing, and community education.

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