

To Chair Bennett and members of the Education Policy Committee:

My name is Alex Maitheanas, and my master's degree is in Human Rights from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, a nationally recognized top ten school in public policy and public affairs. I urge you to vote AGAINST HF 12, a bill to ban transgender women from sports.

Let's try an exercise here. Think of the best tennis player you can possibly think of, then the best gymnast, and the best woman swimmer. I'm willing to bet you said Serena Williams, Simone Biles or Suni Lee, and Katie Ledecky. All four of these women are cisgender. In addition to this, the world's best and strongest powerlifter is also a cisgender woman. By assuming that men and transgender women are inherently better at sports, you are diminishing the success of all women athletes and saying that they will never be as good as a man- despite the fact that all of the previously mentioned athletes are considered to be among the best in the world.

In addition, policy should be based on facts, not misunderstandings. Roller derby is a sport that has allowed transgender athletes to compete for about 8 years now. If transgender women had any "biological advantage" as people claim, then the winning rates for teams with trans women on them would have skyrocketed. The reality is that there has been no change at all, negating the false assumption that trans women will be inherently better at sports.

It's shocking to see that you would try to ban children from playing a sport and having fun. With childhood obesity rates increasing, we should be encouraging all children to get out, have fun, and exercise. But this bill makes it so that trans people would not be able to do that. It's also odd that this bill extends to elementary school students, as elementary schools rarely have any organized sports teams to begin with.

We know here in Minnesota that the Lynx and Whitecaps have better seasons than the Timberwolves and the Wild- but they aren't nearly as well known or uplifted. If you truly cared about protecting women in sports, you would make it so that women's teams had the same publicity as men's. You'd make it so that women athletes aren't paid less than men athletes. You'd make it so that women athletes can be safe around their coaches and mentors, and add extra protections to ensure that women athletes aren't being assaulted by their coaches or doctors. But none of that has been done- the only thing you've done is attempt to ban a marginalized community from sports based on misinformation and disinformation. And when policy is formed around incorrect assumptions, everyone suffers.

Once again, I urge the members of the committee to vote AGAINST HF 12.

Sincerely,

Alex Maitheanas

Minnesota House  
Education Policy Committee  
Testimony on HF12  
02/18/2025

Good afternoon Chair Bennett and committee members. My name is Melinda Torok-Singleton, and I thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony in opposition to HF12. This is a bill that was created solely to discriminate against certain children based on their sex, and is based entirely on a false premise. If passed, the process of enforcing this legislation will harm the very children that it claims to protect.

When I was growing up, my siblings and I were all in Tae Kwon Do (and we all reached first degree black belt). Our dojo did not segregate classes by sex. I started at 9 years old in classes with a mix of people from children my age through middle aged adults of both sexes. At a certain belt level, this included sparring classes with direct physical contact. All students were held to similar athletic standards regardless of sex, and we *thrived* because there was never a mindset that the boys were biologically stronger or faster than us, and studies such as one published by the CDC upholds that there is no significant difference prior to puberty. For those of us who stuck with the dojo through puberty, there was so much diversity in how our bodies developed that segregating by sex still didn't make any sense. At our tests to move up a belt rank, I've seen teen boys struggle to break a board, and teen girls who didn't bat an eye at driving their elbow through a cinder block slab. It was much more effective to separate groups by belt level (and therefore by demonstrated capability and skill level) than by sex.

I would also like to speak on how this bill will directly harm the very people that it claims to protect: young women and girls. This bill puts every girl enrolled in a sport in danger of being subjected to invasive and unnecessary genital inspections if they are suspected of being anything other than cisgender. How many adults should a young child have to show their genitals to in order to have sufficient proof of their biological sex? For a party that claims to want to protect children from predatory adults, I would think that even one would be too many. And if the physical inspection is inconclusive, will the child be forced to have their hormones and chromosomes tested too? If that is required, who will pay for it? Will we force that burden on the hardworking, tax paying parents? or will that be what the GOP has called an "unfunded mandate" for the school district to carry out?

To conclude, engaging in a physical sport in a mixed-sex environment gave me the confidence to trust in my skills no matter who my opponent was. I was never nervous or fearful of competing against my male peers, as this bill implies is a widespread phenomenon amongst girls in sports. It breaks my heart that this bill aims to take that type of experience away from our children. I want my future child to be able to strive for any athletic goal they choose whether they're a boy or a girl, just like I was. How is it that, in the last 20 years, we've completely reversed course on that messaging for our girls?

I thank you for considering my testimony, and once more urge you to oppose this incredibly harmful bill. All children in Minnesota deserve the chance to participate in sports without the blatant discrimination that this bill would create.

Hello, Jody!

My name is Kim, and I'm a non-binary mental health therapist that sees primarily LGBTQIA+ folx. I see several teenagers that identify as trans or non-binary, so the bill to ban kids like my clients participation in sports is particularly close to home. While I do understand some biological differences between AMAB (assigned male at birth) and AFAB (assigned female at birth) individuals, there is also a great variety of skills and strengths regardless of gender or sex.

As a therapist, what I would specifically like to highlight is how trans and non-binary youth already face so much discrimination and exclusion from peers (and sometimes, unfortunately, at home with parents or other family). Whether trans or cisgender, being bullied and excluded from things they enjoy has a largely negative impact on mental health. While sports are important and some can make it a career, I believe it is far more valuable to celebrate diversity while including as many as possible.

With this bill pending, I kindly ask you to consider the mental health and futures of trans and non-binary kids who are only trying to figure themselves out, find friends/community, and engage in fun/healthy activities like sports. When they get older, kids won't remember how many games they won or lost, or what kids on the other team look like. What they will remember, though, is if they were included or not, and if they were able to enjoy what every other kid can enjoy.

I appreciate your time and consideration in reading this, and I ask you to please advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

Best,

**Kim Aspen, MS (they/them)**

I strongly oppose HF12. This bill is about exclusion and discrimination against transgender and non-binary students. This policy sends a harmful message to young people that they don't belong, increasing their risk for mental health struggles, social isolation, and harm.

Transgender and non-binary youth deserve the same opportunities as their peers, including the right to participate in sports in a way that aligns with their identity. Research shows that inclusive policies create safer, more supportive environments for all students. Excluding trans and non-binary youth from participation in sports doesn't solve anything, it only fuels stigma and division. As a parent of a child who appears to be a cis gender male and is not reporting anything different, I want him to see and experience the vibrancy that comes from team building and team sports with his peers of any gender and gender expression.

We should be working toward equity, inclusion, and well-being for all students, not targeting an already marginalized group with harmful legislation. I urge you to reject HF12 and instead focus on policies that truly support all young people.

Chelse Bolin

As a Minnesota resident, I am writing to voice my strong opposition to HF 12. Bills like this are not meant to solve any tangible threat to female student-athletes, but instead sow discord amongst Minnesotans and ostracize trans students.

The current political climate has already resulted in Federal bans via Executive Order. The Department of Education recently released a Dear Colleague Letter directing K-12 and college Title IX administrators to adhere to the EO forbidding trans women from participating in sports teams that match their gender identity. The NCAA has followed suit and now prohibits trans women from participating in female sports teams.

With that in mind, this bill would only serve to make trans folks feel unwelcome and unsafe in our state. That is not the Minnesota I know and love. Our state is enriched by having a diverse population, and I hope we can continue to support them.

Respectfully,

April Chaney

St. Paul, MN



February 19, 2025  
House Education Policy Committee

Dear Chair Bennett and Committee Members,

We are writing today in opposition to HF12, which would limit the participation of transgender athletes in sports by insisting that they play on teams aligned with their sex assigned at birth.

As a pediatrician and as a pediatric psychologist who specialize in the care of transgender and gender diverse youth, we know that this type of legislation would have both immediate and long term consequences for the physical and mental health and well-being of transgender athletes in Minnesota. We also have concerns for inadvertent effects of this type of legislation on the participation of all young athletes in sport, particularly those who might be “flagged” for further evaluation to “confirm” their sex assigned at birth. Athletes, particularly girls and young women participating in sport, have been victims of sexual assault and abuse at the hands of coaches and athletic trainers in the past, and we do not need reasons or excuses for adults to be examining or investigating the bodies of young athletes.

It is well known and documented that youth sports have a positive impact on the physical health as well as the mental well-being and self-confidence of youth athletes. Physical health benefits include growing and maintain strong muscles and bones and improving cardiovascular health. In young athletes it also helps build foundational motor skills like balance and hand-eye coordination. Youth sports are also associated with healthy habits such as regular exercise, healthy eating and increased hydration which reduces the risk of lifestyle related health issues in adulthood. In addition to physical health benefits, there are many mental health benefits of youth sports including reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. They also help young athletes build resilience and emotional regulation skills, as they cope to handle wins and losses, manage stress and deal with competitive pressure. All of these are valuable and translatable skills into adulthood, and are particularly helpful for kids who are targeted for bullying and harassment, which is the case for many transgender and gender diverse students.

Beyond the documented physical and mental health benefits of youth sports participation, we see the social and emotional benefits of sports participation as well. These include developing and maintaining positive friendships and relationships with teammates, fostering a sense of belonging and improving self-esteem. Again, this is a particularly positive benefit for transgender and gender diverse youth, who are more likely to be isolated, experience harassment from peers and have a harder time finding a supportive social group in schools and community.

For all of these reasons, we regularly encourage our young transgender and gender diverse patients to engage in sports for their health and well-being. The proposed bill would limit their participation in sports and intimidate them from wanting to pursue or try new sports in the future. We oppose bill HF12 and the negative impact on transgender athletes and all young athletes in our state. At Children's Minnesota, we are committed to improving the physical and mental health and well-being of all young people in the state of Minnesota, which includes their equitable inclusion in youth sports.

A Kade Goepferd, MD  
Chief Education Officer  
Pediatrician, Gender Health Program  
Children's Minnesota

Kyja Foster, PsyD, LP, Ph.D  
Clinical Psychologist, Gender Health Program  
Children's Minnesota

Hello,

My name is Alison Davys (resident of Eagan, MN), and I would like to submit testimony on behalf of HF 12.

I am 34 years old, and I play women's sports. I was a successful student athlete at Carleton College, competing (as Alison Smyth) at cross-country nationals four times, winning two individual MIAC championship titles in outdoor track, and qualifying as an individual competitor at outdoor track nationals in the 10k my senior year. I continued to compete after college, finishing 14th in the women's division in the Twin Cities Marathon in 2016. I still play sports today, now playing camogie for a highly successful local team, winning nationals in our category in 2023.

I have benefitted immensely from participating in women's sports as a separate category from men's sports.

And I am against HF 12.

In an educational setting, sports should be primarily a pedagogical method for teaching leadership skills, promoting health, and developing skills in working with others. In the United States, boys and girls are often taught different approaches to leadership, health, and how to work with others based on gender. The way girls and boys approach and experience sport reflects this. So in an educational setting, I believe people should participate in sports teams based on their gender (not their sex) to support gender-based sports divisions facilitating the achievement of the pedagogical goals of sports participation.

Thank you for your time.

—Alison Davys

I'm writing to submit my written comments to HF12.

I'm a school social worker who supports all children and families, including those families with transgender and nonbinary children. We know that young people gain many valuable academic, social, emotional, and physical benefits from playing in sports such as leadership, confidence, self-discipline, being a part of a community, and much more. Sports and athletic opportunities provide a valuable addition to one's education and should not be denied to anyone. Transgender and gender non-conforming youth deserve the opportunity to participate in whatever sports team is most aligned with their identity. I implore you to vote in opposition with HF12 as it hurts Minnesota youth and our futures.

Thank you,

Michele Edwins, LICSW

School Social Worker





Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

The Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans works for the implementation of economic, social, legal, and political equality for Minnesota's community of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender expansive, queer, intersex, asexual, and/or two-spirit. The Council strongly opposes HF12, which prohibits transgender and non-binary students from participating in sports teams that align with their gender identity. We encourage a discussion rooted in research and the well-being of all Minnesota youth, recognizing the important role sports play in child development.

Sports provide young people with critical benefits, including physical health, teamwork, leadership, and belonging. For many students—especially those who face social isolation—being part of a team can be life-changing. Research shows that transgender youth experience higher rates of anxiety and depression due to systemic discrimination and social stigma<sup>i</sup>, and inclusive sports participation has been linked to improved mental health and self-esteem<sup>ii,iii</sup>. Excluding transgender youth from these opportunities may increase their vulnerability at a time when support systems are most needed.

Beyond exclusion, HF12 could open the door to harmful and intrusive medical evaluations of children. There is no fair or ethical way to enforce this bill without subjecting children – transgender and cisgender alike – to invasive gender policing through medical or physical examinations, an unacceptable violation of privacy and dignity<sup>iv</sup>.

There is no evidence to support the idea that trans-inclusive policies negatively impact cisgender athletes<sup>v,vi</sup>, but there is significant evidence proving that trans-exclusive policies harm transgender youth and young adults<sup>vii,viii,ix</sup>.

Minnesota has long prioritized fairness and inclusion for all its students. We urge the committee to reject HF12 and instead focus on policies that support all children, ensuring that every young person – regardless of gender identity – has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive in a safe and welcoming environment.

Sincerely,

Emma McBride  
Executive Director, Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans  
Website: [mn.gov/lgbtqia2s/](http://mn.gov/lgbtqia2s/)  
Email: [emma.mcbride@state.mn.us](mailto:emma.mcbride@state.mn.us)

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<sup>i</sup> Nicolas A. Suarez et al, “Disparities in School Connectedness, Unstable Housing, Experiences of Violence, Mental Health, and Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors Among Transgender and Cisgender High School Students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey,” *MMWR Suppl* (United States, 2024), 73(Suppl-4):50–58.

<sup>ii</sup> Michael J. Panza et al, “Adolescent Sport Participation and Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 42, 3 (May 2020): 201-218.

<sup>iii</sup> Scott L Zuckerman et al, “The behavioral, psychological, and social impacts of team sports: a systematic review and meta-analysis,” *The Physician and Sports Medicine* 49, 3 (Sept. 2021):246-261.

<sup>iv</sup> *Hecox v. Little*, 79 F.4<sup>th</sup> 1009 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2023)

<sup>v</sup> Brief of Law Enforcement Officers et al. as Amici Curiae in Support of Respondent, Gloucester County School Board v. Grimm, United States Supreme Court. No 16-273, (May 2017).

<sup>vi</sup> Amira Hasenbush, Andrew R. Flores, and Jody L. Herman. “Gender Identity Nondiscrimination Laws in Public Accommodations: A Review of Evidence Regarding Safety and Privacy in Public Restrooms, Locker Rooms, and Changing Rooms,” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 16, 1 (July 2018).

<sup>vii</sup> Gabriel R. Murchison et al. “School Restroom and Locker Room Restrictions and Sexual Assault Risk Among Transgender Youth,” *Pediatrics* 143, 6 (June 2019).

<sup>viii</sup> Jennifer McGuire et al. “School Climate for Transgender Youth: A Mixed Method Investigation of Student Experiences and School Responses,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 39, 10 (Oct. 2010): 1175 – 1188.

<sup>ix</sup> Jennifer R. Pharr et al. “Serial Mediation Analysis of the Association of Familiarity with Transgender Sports Bans and Suicidality among Sexual and Gender Minority Adults in the United States,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19 (August 2022).

Dear Jody Withers

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HF12, which seeks to exclude transgender and non-binary students from participating on female high school sports teams. As a queer individual, I find this proposed legislation deeply troubling, discriminatory, and unconstitutional.

Transgender and non-binary students deserve the same rights and opportunities as their peers, including the ability to participate fully in school activities such as sports. Excluding them not only violates principles of fairness and equality but also sends a harmful message that their identities are invalid or unworthy of respect. Such exclusion exacerbates the challenges these students already face, including higher rates of mental health struggles, bullying, and marginalization.

Research and experiences from states with inclusive policies demonstrate that transgender participation in sports does not harm competitive fairness. Instead, it enriches the lives of all students by fostering teamwork, diversity, and empathy. These are the values we should champion in our schools.

I urge you to oppose HF12 and to advocate for policies that affirm the dignity and rights of all students, including transgender and non-binary individuals. Let us lead with compassion, understanding, and a commitment to equality for everyone in our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

--

Karly Fischer, MA

She/Her/Hers

Pre-licensed Therapist, Group Facilitator

Hello Jody Withers,

I am a social worker and mental health therapist providing services to many adolescents in our communities. I strongly oppose HF12. This bill is about exclusion and discrimination against transgender and non-binary students. This policy sends a harmful message to young people that they don't belong, increasing their risk for mental health struggles, social isolation, and harm.

Transgender and non-binary youth deserve the same opportunities as their peers, including the right to participate in sports in a way that aligns with their identity. Research shows that inclusive policies create safer, more supportive environments for all students. Excluding trans and non-binary youth from participation in sports doesn't solve anything, it only fuels stigma and division.

We should be working toward equity, inclusion, and well-being for all students, not targeting an already marginalized group with harmful legislation. I urge you to reject HF12 and instead focus on policies that truly support all young people.

Sincerely,

**Haven Hafar, MSW, LGSW (she/her) | Mental Health Therapist**

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House File 12, which seeks to restrict participation in female sports teams to individuals assigned female at birth. This proposed legislation raises significant concerns regarding discrimination against, inclusivity toward, and the well-being of transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary students in Minnesota.

This exclusion of trans and non-binary students undermines the education and extracurricular activities available to them, which may make them targets of bullying and adversely affect their mental health. Denying them the opportunity to participate in sports consistent with their gender identity can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression. It is crucial that we foster inclusive environments for the safety, well-being, and care of all Minnesotan students, regardless of their gender identity, for the sake of our state's future as a "blue beacon" in the Midwest where all people can feel safe and valued.

In addition, the time and resources that will be needed to field any legal challenges arising from this bill could be better deployed for so many other, better, non-discriminative projects!

I urge you to consider the harmful implications of HF12 on transgender and non-binary students. Embracing inclusivity in school sports not only enriches the experiences of all students but also reflects Minnesota's commitment to diversity and equal opportunity. I respectfully request that this bill be thrown out, and instead our government focus on policies that affirm and protect the rights of all students, regardless of their gender identity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Regina Kachelmacher

Minneapolis Minnesota



City Council Member Emily Koski – 11th Ward

350 S. Fifth St. - Room 307

Minneapolis, MN 55415

TEL 612.673.2211

[www.minneapolismn.gov](http://www.minneapolismn.gov)

February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the Minnesota House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Emily Koski and I am a Minneapolis City Council Member representing Ward 11. I am also a Minneapolis Public School parent and a volunteer youth sports coach through our parks and recreation leagues. I write to you in opposition to House File 12.

There are many documented benefits to youth participation in sports. Those benefits range from physical health and social and emotional development to increased capacity to handling stress and overall improvements to mental health and well-being. Every child and adolescent in Minnesota should be afforded the opportunity to participate in activities free from discrimination and our government should be working to expand access to sports and recreation.

Trans youth are among our most vulnerable populations in Minnesota. Research by the Trevor Project showed that in 2022, 52% of trans and non-binary youth in our state contemplated suicide. Enacting policies that will further isolate gender non-conforming and trans-identifying youth will only exacerbate harms to this highly vulnerable group.

HF 12 is an attempt to instill trans fear and panic targeting a minority of young people in our state. It's dangerous in a moment when the trans community is the subject to an increase in hate crimes and political targeting at a national scale.

As a mother and a community member who cares deeply about the welfare of our LGBTQ+ youth, I urge members to vote against this bill.

Sincerely,

Emily Koski  
Council Member, Ward 11  
City of Minneapolis

Hello there,

I'm a Family Medicine doc in Roseville. I was learning about this bill, the HF12 around female sports. As a primary care physician I am deeply concerned this would cause great harm in its implementation. This clearly would lead to bias and without any evidence to support that it would add any integrity to sports. Surely more evidence and research around how we need to manage sporting events is important however we are not there yet for anything that would at all support this approach. This lacks evidence of being effective for the goal and I believe would only subject women to unfair judgement and process that is unproven. If I had to preform this exam to "prove" to society that a patient has a vulva and ovaries, I would be really disturbed at being forced to do this. That is not my job, this isn't a role at the doctor's office that is in the best interest of my patients and this isn't what the evidence supports.



## MINNESOTA CHAPTER



Chair Peggy Bennett  
Education Policy  
February 19, 2025

Chair Bennett and Education Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of the MN School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) and the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW-MN), we are writing about concerns regarding HF12.

NASW-MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state, representing 2000 social workers, and MSSWA is a professional group serving over 700 members to advance the practice of school social work in MN. Collectively, our organizations offer experience and expertise in children's mental health and wellness in schools.

Social workers value the dignity and worth of each person. Our ethics guide us to treat each client in a compassionate and respectful way that is mindful of individual differences, cultural norms and ethnic diversity. We promote clients' socially responsible self-determination based on their individual values.

Trans kids are playing and participating in sports across our state today. Social workers believe that should continue. Athletics has demonstrated positive impacts on physical and mental health, on educational attainment, and on self-confidence and teamwork skills. Trans girls and women deserve to have the same access to these benefits.

This bill will discourage participation and increase scrutiny of not just trans, but all girls' bodies which we know to be harmful for mental health. Athletic participation should foster tenacity and grit, not undermine confidence. The Minnesota State High School League has permitted trans athletes to participate and compete consistent with their gender identity since 2014. This current policy is consistent with social work values and creates a more inclusive Minnesota.

NASW-MN and the Minnesota School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) oppose HF12.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Karen E. Goodenough, LGSW  
Executive Director  
NASW-MN

Julie Campanelli, LICSW  
President  
MSSWA

Christy McCoy, LICSW  
Legislative Chair  
MSSWA



February 18, 2025

Chair Peggy Bennett  
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

OutFront Minnesota, our state's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization, writes in opposition of HF 12 (Scott).

This bill seeks to exclude trans women and girls from participation in athletics at every age.

There has been significant national debate over the participation of trans athletes, particularly the participation of trans women and girls in recent years. In Minnesota, trans athletes have been playing and competing for more than a decade without issue and our state's celebrated status as a national leader for participation in girls athletics speaks volumes to how a culture of support and inclusion is good for all athletes.

And for trans youth who have had the opportunity to play, the positive impacts of full participation are clear.

A parent in the West Metro shared about her daughter's passion for athletics:

*"It's where she finds joy, builds friendships, and feels like she truly belongs. Participating in sports has helped her feel like the girl that she is. It's made her stronger—both physically and emotionally—and has given her a place where she can thrive. She's a beloved teammate and a hard-working athlete. Her participation makes her stronger and more confident—and it makes her team stronger, too."*

And another parent shares:

*"My daughter's experience as a trans athlete in sports was a lifeline, not just during high school but even now as she navigates her first year of college life...She was neither a star athlete nor seeking to break records—but she was dedicated, enthusiastic, and a beloved part of her teams. Her coaches and teammates recognized her for the joy and encouragement she brought, giving her the honor of carrying the team flag to games, winning spirit awards and becoming a captain. Despite the challenges she faced, an early suicide attempt, and a school environment where bullying forced her to finish senior year online, her teams were one of the only places she found refuge and connection. Sports gave her a community to be a part of, one that not only stood by her, but celebrated her when she needed it most."*

A young trans athlete from southern Minnesota shares this about their experiences:

*“Sports have been a source of joy for me and an important part of my mental health. They provide a space to feel valued, supported, and truly myself. Being part of the right team enhances this sense of belonging and allows me to thrive. This connection between sports, community, and self-acceptance is something I value greatly.”*

The connection, participation, community, and acceptance found in athletics are important to youth; no matter how they identify; and we believe all students should continue to have the opportunity to compete and play.

As the stories these families shared make clear, participation in athletics can have wide-ranging positive impacts on physical and mental health and can help build confidence, camaraderie, and belonging—which can be especially valuable for LGBTQ+ students who are often at greater risk of bullying and harassment. In addition, athletic participation has been shown to positively correlate with academic performance<sup>1</sup>, which should be of shared interest to all members on this committee.

Bans on the participation of trans athletes often have unintended consequences—including impacts on cisgender athletes who may be forced to undergo invasive and unnecessary medical evaluations or face public harassment if they are perceived to be transgender. This bill creates no guardrails whatsoever to that scrutiny, nor does it account for the harms and costs young athletes and their families may have to bear should they be *perceived* as violating this proposal.

These are not just abstract risks:

In 2023, a 9-year-old “was brought to tears after an adult interrupted a track meet to accuse the girl of being transgender”<sup>2</sup> In another case, a Utah “high school athletics association secretly investigated a female athlete – without telling her or her parents – after receiving complaints from the parents of two girls she had defeated in competition suggesting the girl was transgender.”<sup>3</sup> And in yet another, an 8-year old’s team in Nebraska was disqualified from a soccer competition because she “look[ed] like a boy.”<sup>4</sup> These same accusations have dogged female athletes at every level of sport, including most notably Olympic Boxer Imane Khelif, who has been the subject of - in her words - “baseless accusations that are false and offensive” about her gender and eligibility.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9737165/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sacbee.com/news/nation-world/world/article276378716.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/18/utah-school-investigates-student-transgender>

<sup>4</sup>

[https://www.espn.com/espnw/sports/story/\\_/id/19553403/nebraska-soccer-tournament-bans-8-year-old-girl-team-looks-boy](https://www.espn.com/espnw/sports/story/_/id/19553403/nebraska-soccer-tournament-bans-8-year-old-girl-team-looks-boy)

<sup>5</sup>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/olympic-boxer-imane-khelif-fights-back-boxing-association-fil-es-suit-g-rcna191917>

Subjecting young athletes and their families to this kind of scrutiny is personally damaging, but moreover, it flies in the face of decades of work by female athletes to define themselves not by biology but by their accomplishments. There are many ways we can and should be supporting women and girls sports, this bill is not one of them.

At a time when LGBTQ+ rights are facing increasing attacks and when programs designed to support inclusion of all kinds are being rolled back; it is crucial that our leaders and allies stand up with and for our communities. We urge you to oppose this bill which will harm *all* women and girls, while furthering a narrative that trans athletes should not have the same chance to play and compete as their peers. We reject that narrative.

Every student deserves the chance to play.

OutFront Minnesota stands in opposition to HF 12, please vote no.

Sincerely,

Kat Rohn  
Executive Director

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## What Science Tells Us About Trans Athletes:

Recent research continues to shed light on the participation of transgender athletes in sports.

A comprehensive 2023 review by Assistant Professor D.J. Oberlin at Lehman College examined the impact of gender-affirming hormone therapy on athletic performance.

Oberlin concluded that “an individual’s sex does not determine their success or failure at any athletic event despite the high level of competition.”

The study also noted there are great variations among cisgender athletes, such as differences in height, weight, training, and more. That means in the general population there are bound to be people that are better at some sport than others, but no one seems to worry about those. “It is expected that about 2.3% of a normally distributed population is likely to fall above two standard deviations from a population mean,” Oberlin explained. “These exceptional individuals may be those who are gifted and excel at some sport or athletic performance.”

In 2024, the idea that trans women athletes have an inherent advantage over cis athletes was once again undercut by a study funded by the International Olympic Committee and conducted at the University of Brighton in England. It was published in April in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

That study found:

🏳️‍🌈 Transgender women performed worse than cisgender women in tests measuring lower-body strength.

🏳️‍🌈 Transgender women performed worse than cisgender women in tests measuring lung function.

🏳️‍🌈 Transgender women had a higher percentage of fat mass, lower fat-free mass, and weaker handgrip strength compared to cisgender men.

🏳️‍🌈 Transgender women’s bone density was found to be equivalent to that of cisgender women, which is linked to muscle strength.

Another common myth is the idea that boys or men might falsely claim a female identity just to compete in women’s sports. However, there is no evidence to support this claim. Transitioning is a deeply personal and often difficult process—not something athletes would do just to win a competition.

The reality is that trans athletes, like all athletes, just want a fair chance to compete in the sports they love.

Therefore, science tells us:

🏳️‍🌈 After hormone therapy, trans women’s athletic performance aligns more closely with cisgender women.

🏳️‍🌈 Competitive advantage is complex and influenced by many factors, including training, skill, and individual physiology—not just gender identity.

🏳️‍🌈 Transgender women are likely to be at a physical disadvantage compared to cisgender athletes.

Let's stand for inclusion, celebrate diversity in sports, and ensure that all athletes are treated with fairness and respect.

I strongly oppose HF12. This bill is about exclusion and discrimination against transgender and non-binary students. This policy sends a harmful message to young people that they don't belong, increasing their risk for mental health struggles, social isolation, and harm.

Transgender and non-binary youth deserve the same opportunities as their peers, including the right to participate in sports in a way that aligns with their identity. Research shows that inclusive policies create safer, more supportive environments for all students. Excluding trans and non-binary youth from participation in sports doesn't solve anything, it only fuels stigma and division. We should be working toward equity, inclusion, and well-being for all students, not targeting an already marginalized group with harmful legislation. I urge you to reject HF12 and instead focus on policies that truly support all young people.

As a mental health therapist, I feel that it is imperative that we end this kind of stigma in our society.

--

Jen Rynes, MS

I'm writing to express my concern for HF12 which is focused on restricting female sports team participation to the female sex. Athletes should be able to participate in the sports and teams that they identify with rather than be restricted to sports teams based on the female sex.

Athletes should have the opportunity to compete, find camaraderie, build friendships, and participate in the teams that they identify with and can compete in as a true expression of who they are as a person.

I do not support HF12 for the harm it would cause females that would have to "prove" their female sex in order to participate in team sports and do not see value in restricting participation in female sports based on sex.

Let athletes play and participate on the teams they identify with.

Sincerely,

Sam Schwichtenberg

While I can understand your opinion on HF 12 and restricting access to sports to ensure an equal playing field for participants, I believe the roll-back of existing standards would be damaging to athletes, both that identify with other genders than their birth gender, and to those that just want to play a sport in their assigned birth gender.

All athletes would be put out by invasive gender checks and I don't think that's something we should impose upon children who are playing sports primarily for fun.

I do not support imposing restrictions on female sports based on gender assigned at birth. And would recommend we do not continue with passage of HF12 or the companion bill SF916.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Richard Simpson

Chanhassen, MN



February 16, 2025

I am writing from my daughter's volleyball tournament this weekend to urge you to **reject HF 12**. As a parent of an almost 16-year-old cisgender girl, I am convinced that every girl–cis or transgender–deserves the right to participate in the sport that matches their gender identity. For my own daughter, sports have helped her to work out how to deal with her competitive nature, work on a team, and build invaluable social skills. She is focused on the block; I am focused on the intangible ways that she has grown. Every child deserves this key childhood experience.

Minnesota decided that discrimination was wrong a long time ago when we made the commitment to all children playing sports. This was rooted in science–scientists have repeatedly said there is no single biological factor that determines sex, and sex assigned at birth is not the sole determinant of gender. And these rules have been working well for children for eleven years.

Practically, I do not want my daughter's policed. If this proposed bill were to pass, this would invite adults to scrutinize children's bodies in ways that are not appropriate for anyone to do. The bill is incredibly invasive–specifically naming that a doctor must analyze a child's INTERNAL and EXTERNAL anatomy. We are talking about elementary school children being put through a pelvic exam to play soccer or volleyball. The doctor must also analyze chromosomes and testosterone levels. ANYONE can register a “complaint” at any grade and have invasive medical procedures just to continue to play.

Every body is different. Every body develops at different rates. My cis daughter was almost 6 feet in middle school. Would she have been targeted? If she had a good spike in a game, could another parent require invasive medical evaluation just be allowed to play at the next game?

Let the kids play! We have the right laws in place. HF 12 would create a dangerous and demeaning culture for our state. Please do not allow this bill to advance.

My best,

Kristy Snyder,  
Parent of a Volleyballer  
Richfield, Minnesota

I am writing regarding the bill HF12 that is going to be heard in the House Ed Policy Committee. I would like to share my comments as I am unable to testify

I strongly oppose HF12. This bill is about exclusion and discrimination against transgender and non-binary students. This policy sends a harmful message to young people that they don't belong, increasing their risk for mental health struggles, social isolation, and harm. We KNOW the impact of not being able to be who you are and the increased rates of self-harm, suicide and other negative impacts. Trans violence is happening as I type this.

Transgender and non-binary youth deserve the same opportunities as their peers, including the right to participate in sports in a way that aligns with their identity. Research shows that inclusive policies create safer, more supportive environments for all students. Excluding trans and non-binary youth from participation in sports doesn't solve anything, it only fuels stigma and division. We should be working toward equity, inclusion, and well-being for all students, not targeting an already marginalized group with harmful legislation. I urge you to reject HF12 and instead focus on policies that truly support all young people

--

Bee Thomas (They,Them)

MSW, LICSW/ Board Approved Clinical Supervisor

Marketing and Community Outreach Director

Dear Members of the MN House Education Committee,

I am writing to express my concern regarding bill HF12, which is scheduled to be heard soon by your committee.

I am troubled by the potential impact of restricting female sports team participation to individuals assigned female at birth. Such a restriction raises significant concerns regarding fairness, inclusivity, and the well-being of all students.

Specifically, I am concerned that this bill may unfairly exclude transgender girls and disregard the natural biological variations that exist within the female population. This could undermine the principle of fair play and equal access to sports for all women, while also perpetuating harmful stereotypes about gender and athletic ability.

As a parent of a school-aged child, my primary concern is that this bill would add an unnecessary layer of restriction to extracurricular activities that provide clear benefits to students. School sports are a positive and valuable outlet and should be accessible to all students, regardless of gender identity.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments. I urge you to carefully consider the potential negative impacts of HF12 on the students of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Aleah Vinick

February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

As an advocate for students having access and the ability to participate in the extracurricular activities of their choice, I am writing to express my opposition to HF12. I volunteer in my community with a group dedicated to keeping students involved in extracurricular activities. And while I realize these activities are a privilege, for many students, they are a life line. They offer community, access to other caring adults in a student's life and, quite frankly, are the reason some students get out of bed and go to school every day. Restricting or denying access to these activities to students based on their gender identity is both damaging and cruel.

The Minnesota State High School League policy allowing students the ability to participate in extracurricular activities according to their gender identity was adopted in 2015 by a board vote of 18-1. It was not controversial at the time and none of the scenarios offered up by the new critics of this policy have come to light. Girls' participation in sports in this state remains one of the highest in the nation.<sup>1</sup> In fact, states with inclusionary policies have seen girls' participation remain stable or increase well after adopting these policies.<sup>2</sup> And, far from protecting them, exclusionary policies such as this one hurt girls. These policies reinforce outdated stereotypes about girls, their bodies and abilities, and they allow individuals to police and judge girls' bodies in both public and private spaces.

All of our students deserve the right to be treated with respect, dignity, and humanity while receiving their elementary and secondary education. To quote the Women's Sports Foundation, "Society wins when humanity prevails."<sup>3</sup> For the benefit of all our students, I urge you to vote against HF12 as introduced.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Taffe  
Bloomington, MN

<sup>1</sup>Volk, John, "Minnesota is a National Leader in Girls High School Sports Participation", *Star Tribune*, 20 of June, 2022

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Lindsay Pieper, Dr. Jaime Schultz, Dr. Libby Sharrow. "The Future of Women's Sports Includes Transgender Women and Girls", *Athlete Ally*, 11 of August, 2021

<sup>3</sup> "WSF Statement on State Bills Banning Transgender Youth Sport Participation", *Women's Sports Foundation*, 11 of March 2021

Monday February 17, 2025

Dear Jody Withers,

I'm writing in opposition of HF 12 with the intent to restrict female sports participation to the female sex. Transgender inclusion in sports has been the standard in Minnesota for over a decade without issue. For Minnesota lawmakers to discriminate against kids/youth and ban them from playing sports because they're transgender denies them vital childhood experiences and life lessons from the team building and dynamics.

HF 12 would take away the ability for trans girls to participate in sports based on hate rather than encouraging kids to play and be kids. Transgendered girls play in sports for the same reason as anyone else. They are engaged in physical activity, teamwork, social dynamics and being with their friends. I don't stand for any bill that would deter, encourage separation or hate on any youth for being different. Sports provided me space to be an individual, connect with my friends, push limits and learn lifelong skills and memories.

I have a daughter now and when she gets to the age wanting to join sports I do not want her body policed. If passed, this bill would invite and encourage adults to scrutinize children's bodies. Stating that a DOCTOR must analyze a child's internal and external anatomy is repulsive. Girls are already subject to increase scrutiny and assaults. This bill invites ELEMENTARY children being put through a pelvic exam. If anyone can register a complain at any grade and have an invasive procedure required to continue.

Minnesota has had policies that include trans students to participate in sports and have been working for years. Blanket bans on trans girls being excluded from sports threatens to roll back the progress we've made. Creating more separations in schools for young people is only pushing more harmful rhetoric increasing hate against a small community. Please do not allow this bill to advance.

Thank you

Christa DeBoer

Minneapolis, MN 55418

Feb 17, 2025

No to HF 12

I am writing as a former athlete and current supporter of many young people who deserve to play sports in leagues that match their gender identity.

Growing up, I was a multi-sport athlete. I played soccer, softball, basketball, golf, and swam. I loved having the opportunity to try lots of new activities, but swimming was the one that really stuck. Swimming gave me the opportunity to deal with stress, build confidence, deal with my competitive nature, work on a team, and build social skills. I built lifelong friendships and skills I still carry with me today. I also had the opportunity to learn mental and physical health practices that I still use in my adult life. I received a scholarship to swim in college. Every child deserves to have these critical childhood experiences, in a space that makes them feel comfortable and valued. Every child deserves the opportunity to excel in sport if that's what they want.

Science tells us that there is no single biological factor that determines sex, and that sex assigned at birth is not the only determinant of gender. Minnesota has trusted families and individual athletes for years to make decisions about joining the leagues that best match the child's gender identity.

If this bill gets passed as proposed it invites adults to scrutinize the bodies of young people in ways that are inappropriate for anyone to do. It specifically states that anyone can register a complaint against an athlete, and then that athlete would need to be seen by a doctor who would analyze a child's internal and external anatomy. As a young athlete who was often taller, had broader shoulders, and who excelled at swimming - would I have been targeted? Would I have won a race only to have it questioned simply because my body didn't look like the typical female athlete's? Would I have then been forced to have a pelvic exam and my testosterone levels checked in 5th grade in order to continue to swim? And if I did, would my parents have felt comfortable enough to speak up? Would they have decided it wasn't worth the fight and encouraged me to quit swimming instead of dealing with the invasiveness? Where would I be today if not for the experiences I was so lucky to have, and the benefits of the scholarship I received that made college more affordable for my family?

As someone who now spends their career advocating on behalf of young people, who has many nieces, nephews, friends with kids, and who cares deeply about the mental and physical health of kids statewide - I can't wait for these kids to fall in love with sports the way I did. For them to feel healthy, safe, valued, and respected. So let kids play. Don't encourage this policing of bodies. Don't allow HF 12 to create a dangerous culture in sport in Minnesota. Don't allow this bill to pass.

Erin Martin  
Former Athlete, Current Advocate  
Waconia, MN