

Good afternoon-

Thank you for the invite, but unfortunately I'm unable to participate in the hearing on 8/4/21. I've linked a recent op-ed I penned related to this topic: <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/transgender-athletes-sports-ban-pennsylvania-new-jersey-20210610.html>.

In addition, I'd like to reinforce to the members of the House Education Committee that sports offer opportunities to get the physical benefits of exercise, develop the social skills involved in teamwork and competition, and strive for goals that may have once seemed unattainable to young people/individuals at a young age. Experiences like these can have positive benefits for children that last a lifetime. The opportunity to play sports-- to develop resilience and form a positive connection with a caring adult-- is even more critical for youth who identify as transgender since they are more likely to experience stress from stigma and discrimination. Claims of transgender girls/youth having an unfair advantage in sports are based on misunderstandings of biology and hormones, have not been backed by any concrete examples of unfair athlete advantage, and are irrelevant to K-12 school sports. Like cisgender children, the vast majority of transgender youth do not desire to become elite-level athletes. They just want the chance to play.

For kids, sports can be a refuge as well as a source of joy and strength that just might save their life. In addition to organizations like the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), the [NCAA](#) has opposed discriminatory policies and announced that they will not hold events in states with such legislation in place. Not only could House Bill 972 prevent transgender children from playing sports, but it also sends the message that they are somehow less deserving than others to fully participate in life and have the same rights. Pennsylvania should be focusing on providing all kids, and especially trans kids, more opportunities — not fewer — to play sports in a healthy and supportive environment.

Again, thank you for the invitation.

Sincerely,

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