

Erica Ramirez
Director of Operations | Mid-America LGBT Chamber of Commerce
Testimony in Opposition of HB2238
Fairness in Women's Sports
Senate Education Committee

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge the high suicide rate among LGBTQ+ teens. According to the Trevor Project, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24, and LGBTQ+ youth are almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth. The reasons for this are complex, but they are rooted in societal attitudes that stigmatize and ostracize LGBTQ+ individuals. By banning transgender athletes from participating in sports, we are sending a message that their gender identity is not valid, that they are not welcome in certain spaces, and that their opportunities for self-expression and personal growth are limited. This can have serious consequences for their mental health and well-being. By passing this bill, you are signing off for more death and sadness in your communities.

My name is Erica Ramirez, my pronouns are she/her. I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community, a sports official, a former youth, high school, and college soccer coach, a former contributor in higher education but most importantly- I am here.

I am here to ask you not to pass HB2238. I've lived the experience of being a college athlete- I had the opportunity to compete at an elite level and was honored with athletic scholarships. Never in my athletic career was I personally impacted by competing with trans athletes. They were my teammates, or they were an opponent on the field. Nothing more, nothing less.

As the Director of Operations at the Mid-America LGBT Chamber of Commerce, I represent over 480 business members, some of whom are the largest employers in Kansas and others who represent growing industries like biotechnology and information technology. We are opposed to the attack on transgender children shrouded in the guise of protecting our daughters in sports. This bill addresses a non-issue, puts ideology ahead of our state's economy, and goes against the Kansas tradition of small government.

In recent years, there has been a heated debate about whether transgender athletes should be allowed to compete in sports. Some people argue that allowing transgender athletes to participate in sports that align with their gender identity is unfair to cisgender athletes, and could also pose risks to the safety of women in particular. I am anti- HB2238 sports ban because this issue is about much more than college scholarships, athletic competition, and who stands with the gold medal around their neck. It is about creating a more inclusive and accepting society for all individuals, including those who are already marginalized and stigmatized.

Over 5% of our citizens in Kansas identify as LGBTQ+. The constant attacks on the LGBTQ+ community by our state legislature send a message that we are not welcome in Kansas. This is a state where most citizens believe in small government, yet bills like this are the epitome of

government overreach. They are political theatre designed to incite voters to the polls for the personal expediency of the candidates proposing and supporting this bill.

Bills like HB2238 tell the LGBTQ+ community, families, and friends that they are not welcome in Kansas. A recently released Gallop poll cites that 7.1% of the next-generation workforce identify as LGBTQ+. Over 71% of that same generation care about and make choices based on LGBTQ+ rights. Those individuals are leaving Kansas rather than coming here because of short-sighted bills like HB2238. We see LGBTQ+ students who graduate from our high schools, certificate programs, and universities flee our state every year, and we hear our business members lament they were unable to hire them.

Furthermore, the argument that transgender athletes have an unfair advantage over cisgender athletes is not supported by scientific evidence. While there are some physiological differences between cisgender and transgender individuals, these differences are not significant enough to give transgender athletes an inherent advantage. Additionally, many sports organizations have already developed guidelines and policies for accommodating transgender athletes, such as requiring a certain period of hormone therapy before competing in a particular category.

But beyond the technicalities of athletic competition, this issue is really about creating a more inclusive and accepting society for all individuals. When we ban transgender athletes from participating in sports, we are sending a message that their identities are not valid, that they are not welcome in certain spaces, and that they are not worthy of the same opportunities as their cisgender peers. This only serves to reinforce the existing power structures that have long favored cisgender white men, and it perpetuates the cycle of discrimination and oppression that LGBTQ+ individuals and other minorities have faced for far too long.

In conclusion, I am anti-trans sports ban because I believe that sports are about much more than competition and scholarship opportunities. They are about creating a sense of belonging, community, and personal growth. By banning transgender athletes from participating in sports, we are creating more of an "other" in an already ostracized group of individuals. We are taking away yet another opportunity for LGBTQ+ individuals to live and survive in a world that should accept them. Instead, we are seeking to create a world where men continue to have full control, and where discrimination and oppression are allowed to thrive. As a society, we must do better than this. We must embrace diversity and inclusivity, and create a world where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported.

With passion and purpose,

Erica Ramirez