

Testimony for the House Education Policy and Administration Comm.

Re: SB 211 04/23/2025

Submitted by Mary Wilke, Concord NH

There must be a better way to protect the safety of all athletes than banning a whole category of people from girls' sports teams. I find it ironic that some of the same lawmakers who have created an expensive second system of publicly funded education based on the idea that each child's needs should be considered and addressed individually and that in their opinion public schools don't do that, now want a blanket rule based on the premise that every trans girl has a built-in athletic advantage regardless of her individual characteristics, and that every one of them poses a danger to her cis peers. Between this and other bills directed at trans people, it feels like the full weight of the government is coming down on a group of young people who already face extraordinary challenges. As a voter in NH, I don't want my government doing this.

When my daughter played on a community basketball team in middle school, one of her teammates was a cisgender girl over 6' tall. Obviously her height was an advantage, and also physical contact with her by someone like my 5'2" daughter was probably more likely to result in injury than contact with someone of more average height. No one suggested this girl be kicked off the team. If all things about this girl had been exactly the same, except that she had been identified as male at birth, this law would have prohibited her from playing. If the real issue is safety - and I understand that many people are genuinely concerned about this - then maybe more neutral policies should be considered - height or weight caps, for instance.

Of course we should be concerned about safety for our young people - but I have to ask why there is so much focus on trans youth, with so many bills directed at them, other than they have sadly become a useful tool in the political battle against so-called wokeness. Rather than adopting a discriminatory policy that realistically only applies to a handful of people in the whole state, I'd prefer a legislative focus on safety issues involving hundreds or thousands of people - like whether the office of child advocacy will be dismantled, whether thousands of children will lose access to health care because their parents can't afford a 5% income tax, and whether children will continue to go hungry in schools because paperwork keeps them from accessing free school lunch.

When NH adopted its anti-discrimination bill (RSA 354-a), it set out the reasons for doing so in the preamble, as follows: "[D]iscrimination not only threatens the rights and proper privileges of its inhabitants but menaces the institutions and foundation of a free democratic state and threatens the peace, order, health, safety and general welfare of the state and its inhabitants."

Please abide by the spirit of this preamble and vote ITL on SB 211.