

Proposed Anti-Transgender Sports Ban in Rhode Island

What You Need To Know

S 2501 would ban transgender girls from playing sports at any public school in Rhode Island. When we tell transgender girls that they can't play girls' sports, it sends the harmful message that they don't belong.

School sports programs teach all girls skills they need to succeed and contribute to the community throughout their lives. Communication, teamwork, self-discipline, leadership, and confidence are essential life skills. We all win when transgender students have equal opportunity to access the educational benefits of sports programs.

We all care about fairness for girls in sports. Inclusion of all girls doesn't threaten that. Transgender girls want the opportunity to play sports for the same reason other girls do: to be a part of a team where they feel like they belong. All students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We shouldn't force transgender girls to choose between being themselves and participating in sports.

This bill came from outside of Rhode Island. We have seen these cookie cutter bills in states across the country. These bills seek to find a solution to a problem that does not exist and aims to make children the enemy.

This bill would override sport governing bodies. Rhode Island schools, supported by the Rhode Island Interscholastic League, have had successful participation policies for years that are inclusive, support the goals of school sports programs, and ensure a level playing field. This bill undermines those efforts. The legislature should not reach in to override these considered policies with a blanket ban.

Laws targeting transgender girls violate the U.S. Constitution and Title IX. There will be litigation if S 2501 becomes law. Where advocates have challenged these laws, courts have blocked them.

This bill is bad for Rhode Island. We decided a long time ago in Rhode Island that everyone is welcome and should have the same opportunities to contribute and succeed. Rhode Island has been on the forefront of civil rights for transgender people for more than 20 years. We were the 2nd state in the country to protect transgender people from discrimination in 2001. We should continue to build upon that legacy and support transgender kids and their families.

