

Donnavan Dillon  
Resident of Lawrence, Kansas  
Oral Opponent Testimony of HB 2238

Chair Thomas and Members of the Committee,

My name is Donnavan Dillon. I was born and raised in Lawrence, Kansas. I am a sophomore at the University of Kansas pursuing a double major in political science and sociology. I graduated from Lawrence High in 2021. I am gay and a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, and I am here today to urge you to oppose HB 2238.

Growing up, activities and school were crucial to my development and identity. This is true for our state's nearly 500,000 K-12 students and 160,000 college students. In middle and high school, I was always the kid in just about every activity and extracurricular. By the time I graduated, I had over 20 Varsity letters in sports and extracurriculars. I have been a part of over six organizations, from student body president to Model UN. These activities were crucial for my upbringing as a fun outlet and for building relationships with my peers, feeling a part of a larger community, and feeling like I belonged. Anyone who has been a part of a team or club can relate to that notion.

One of the things that never was an issue, whether it was sports or extracurriculars, was the genitalia between my teammate's legs or the way they chose to identify. As someone who has played seven sports growing up, I can promise you this has never been an occurrence. I have played with and competed against people who identify all across the gender spectrum. Ultimately, kids in athletics are worried about their team's success and being able to participate in the sports they love. As a gay athlete, athletic teams have been some of the most accepting spaces I've ever been a part of. I've had teammates support, defend, and uplift me. While this is true, that doesn't mean growing up is easy, especially as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

Because of my experience growing up as gay alongside queer peers, there is one truth that I want to share with you. Even though the concerns this bill aims to remedy aren't a part of conversations happening in youth athletics, the ideology and rhetoric this bill upholds have an extremely negative impact on young queer people. This bill perpetuates harmful rhetoric and narratives that get regurgitated by youth who are simply repeating things adults, like you tell them, untrue or not. As someone who has curled up on the sideline to cry because of people like the supporters of this bill, you need to know statements like this make it hard for kids to get out of bed in the morning, to go to class, and in the saddening majority of cases question our lives as a whole. This is something no person, let alone a child, should ever have to focus on for simply wanting to be a part of a soccer, gymnastics, or softball team.

It takes a particular type of monster to vote for something like this, knowing what it will do to queer and, most importantly, trans youth. With the voice of your vote, you will decide if you will put the entire weight of the Kansas government on the backs of the handful of young trans athletes in our state. Because of this, I urge you to have basic human decency and oppose HB 2238. Children's lives depend on it.