

President – Emily Scott, MD, FAAP  
Vice President/Treasurer – Jaime Stelzer, MD, FAAP  
Secretary – Pat Clements, MD, FAAP  
Past President – Tony GiaQuinta, MD, FAAP  
Executive Director – Christopher Weintraut, JD  
INAAP is Incorporated in Indiana



January 23, 2022

The Honorable Robert Behning  
200 W. Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
*Via Email and Hand Delivery*

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

I write today on behalf of over 900 pediatricians, specialists, and pediatric trainees across the state to express our opposition to HB 1041. The Indiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics opposes this legislation because it would harm children in Indiana and further marginalize transgender youth who are already at higher risk of depression and other serious mental health issues. As pediatricians and pediatric clinicians, our mission is the health and wellbeing of all children, and this bill runs counter to that objective.

Research has shown that refusing to acknowledge an individual's gender identity leads to psychological and physical harm.<sup>1</sup> "Gender identity" is a well-established concept in medicine that refers to a person's internal sense of being male or female.<sup>2</sup> Every person has a gender identity, and many children develop stability in their gender identity between ages three and four.<sup>3</sup> Studies indicate up to 0.6% of persons in Indiana identify as transgender, though this number is likely underreported.<sup>4</sup> It is estimated that 0.7% of youth ages 13 to 17 in Indiana, or approximately 3,350 adolescents, identify as transgender.<sup>5</sup> Passing a law banning children in Indiana from participating on sports teams that align with their gender identity would be a detrimental example of ongoing refusal to recognize the gender identity of these children – but it will now be sanctioned in law by the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin A. McLemore (2015) Experiences with Misgendering: Identity Misclassification of Transgender Spectrum Individuals, *Self and Identity*, 14:1, 51-74)

<sup>2</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics Technical Report, Office-Based Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth, 132 *Pediatrics* e297, 298 (2013)

<sup>3</sup> *id.* at e299

<sup>4</sup> The Williams Institute, *How Many Adults Identify as Transgender in the United States?*, 3 (2016)

<sup>5</sup> The Williams Institute, *Age of Individuals Who Identify as Transgender in the United States*, 2, 4 (2017)

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Sports participation has numerous positive benefits for student athletes. In addition to providing opportunities to engage in exercise and socialize with peers, team sports allow adolescents to develop collaborative problem solving, and it guides other health behaviors such as nutrition. Sports participation may even offset risks of adolescent conduct disorder and persistent anti-social behaviors.<sup>6</sup>

For transgender and gender diverse youth, a sports team can often be where they experience a sense of community and inclusion that may otherwise be missing in their lives. In a statement earlier this year, American Academy of Pediatrics President Dr. Lee Savio Beers recognized that “playing on sports teams help youth develop self-esteem, correlates positively with overall mental health, and appears to have a protective effect against suicide.”<sup>7</sup> Taking that opportunity away not only deprives transgender youth of the benefits sports hold for all kids, but also takes away critical avenues to buffering negative mental health effects.

Transgender children, like all children, just want to belong. Taking away opportunities to foster that sense of belonging harms our state’s children and have no place in Indiana.

Sincerely,

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Emily Scott, MD FAAP  
President, Indiana Chapter of the  
American Academy of Pediatrics

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<sup>6</sup> Samek DR, Elkins IJ, Keyes MA, Iacono WG, McGue M. High School Sports Involvement Diminishes the Association Between Childhood Conduct Disorder and Adult Antisocial Behavior. J Adolesc Health. 2015;57(1):107-12

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2021/american-academy-of-pediatrics-speaks-out-against-bills-harming-transgender-youth/>