

Trans Student Athletes Deserve Full Inclusion

I want to speak tonight about why full inclusion of our transgender students in school athletics matters so deeply. I am making this statement because one member of this School Board signed a letter advocating for our state leaders to roll back the protections MN has in place for trans student athletes. Once this was shared in the media, LGBTQ+ students and families have said they feel afraid and unsure about their safety in our District.

Our job as a board is to make sure every student in this district feels safe, valued, and supported — and that includes our transgender students. Sports aren't just about competition. They're about belonging, teamwork, and learning how to be part of something bigger than yourself. Every student deserves that opportunity.

Minnesota has led the way on this for decades. In 1993, our state became the first in the nation to revise its Human Rights Act to include gender identity. In 2015, the Minnesota State High School League allowed transgender athletes to play on the team that matches their gender identity. These policies reflect who we are — a state that values fairness, inclusion, and respect.

It's also important to remember that equality and equity are not the same. Equality means giving everyone the same thing. Equity means giving each student what they need to succeed. For transgender students, that means being seen, affirmed, and allowed to participate fully, as themselves — including in sports.

We've heard threats from the Trump administration about pulling federal funding from schools that uphold these inclusive policies. I want to be crystal clear: **I will never put money before kids.** Our students' safety, dignity, and right to belong come first. Always.

According to the Minnesota Student Survey, LGBTQ+ students — especially transgender youth — have much higher rates of suicidal thoughts and self-harm. That means this isn't just a policy issue — it's a life-and-death issue. To be clear, LGBTQ+ students aren't suicidal because they are queer - they have thoughts of self-harm because of bullying, rejection, lack of emotional safety, and fear of physical harm. When students feel affirmed and included, they are safer and healthier.

Our role is simple: to make sure every student in this district knows they are seen, supported, and safe being exactly who they are. That's what equity looks like. That's what community looks like.

I stand firmly for the full inclusion of transgender students in athletics — consistent with Minnesota law, long-standing policy, and our commitment to dignity and respect for every learner.