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Kansas Action for Children
Opponent Testimony of SB 484
Senate Education Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 484, a bill that would discriminate against transgender youth and prevent them from playing sports alongside their peers. Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where **every** child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive.

When we say “every child,” we mean it—especially children who are often overlooked or even targeted by lawmakers because of their identity. Transgender youth already face discrimination, bullying, and exclusion for simply trying to navigate adolescence as their authentic selves. These recurrent and deeply painful experiences are why they are at higher risk of experiencing depression, engaging in self-harm, and attempting suicide.

At first glance this bill may seem innocent enough, especially if you don’t know any friends, neighbors, family, or coworkers who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. But it’s not. It sends a painful and life-changing message to transgender children—athlete or not—that they don’t belong. Studies have shown that the brain responds to social rejection in the same way that it does physical pain. There is a harmful physiological cost to feeling excluded. The opposite is also true; we feel safe when we feel included. Isn’t that what we all want for our children?

Participation in sports is an incredible way to create belonging, improve academic performance, and enhance self-esteem in all children, including transgender athletes. This bill would prevent them from experiencing the benefits of competing amongst their peers.

Kansas Action for Children urges the committee to protect the health and well-being of transgender youth by rejecting SB 484.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information with you today. Feel free to reach me if you have any questions at john@kac.org.