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# Protesters march against Board of Education's decision to ban transgender athletes from girls' sports



Protesters frustrated with Board of Education's vote to ban transgender athletes from girls' sports

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - A protest and march was held in Downtown Anchorage Saturday after the State Board of Education and Early Development [passed a resolution](#) prohibiting transgender girl athletes from competing in girls' division sports in the high school level.

Organizers of the protest and march say it was formed after the vote by DEED Thursday afternoon. The resolution, titled Preserving the Opportunity for Athletes, would change state regulations to provide a girls' division with participation based on a student's sex at birth.

Protest organizers said the decision hurts a group of people they say is already dealing with unjust discrimination.

"These are a group of people who are being hurt the most by everyone else so it's supremely important to stand up for them and that's why we're doing this," said Billy Henthorn, an organizer for the Party for Socialism and Liberation Anchorage.

At Saturday's protest, dozens of individuals joined and expressed their frustrations with DEED's decision. Many in the crowd were parents, teachers and others who shared personal stories of transgender [the decision may cause.](#)

"My biggest fear is that if we let this go and we don't show up for our youth that it's only going to get worse," said Cynthia Gachupin, a parent of a student in the Anchorage School District. "To see that this is how Anchorage is slowly turning, or really the state of Alaska, and how Anchorage could turn into that is really disappointing, especially as a parent."

A transgender man, who didn't want to be identified by name, described their experience in the Anchorage School District at Saturday's protest.

"This thing we have proposed or that's passing that's banning all trans kids from exploring sports is horrible, if I even had the opportunity to be comfortable and do a sport, maybe my primary education wouldn't have been so rough," the man said.

Anchorage Assembly member Felix Rivera was at Saturday's protest.

"One of the things that's really disappointing to me is that the board gave into their base fears, they could have done better, they could have, instead of voting on this policy. tried to make youth sports more welcoming to everyone and instead they did the opposite, so shame on the board for that," Rivera said.

Protesters talked about transgender people they've lost and how it's impacted their lives.

"With every victory, the war will move its front, and queer folks will continue to lose more and more dignity, more and more rights, more and more of the basic recognition of existence that we have fought so long and so hard for," protester Nika Wolfe said.

Most in attendance of the protest said they will continue to advocate for the reversal of DEED's vote and will fight against its implementation in Anchorage.

Issues involving transgender youth are controversial to many, with those against the Board's decision shaming it, while those in favor of the decision are praising it.

"We're happy this decision is in place, yes, we feel its a decision in the right direction," said Tim Barto, vice president of the Alaska Family Council. "We're afraid it might be challenged. We're expecting it to probably be challenged. The board made the right decision and did so unanimously."

Those who support girls' sports should support the decision, Barto said.

"We're just continuing to say, 'let's keep girls sports safe for girls,' I mean, that's the issue we're looking at," Barto said.

Barto said its unsafe for biological males, regardless of how they identify, to compete against females.

"Lets keep common sense on the right track," Barto said. "We're hoping Alaska will be the 23rd state that will protect girls sports for girls and we're happy this decision was made."

Alaska State Board Chair James Fields said the board's main concerns are safety and fairness in competition.

"I think the misconception is that the board voted against transgender females and that's not the case," Fields wrote in a statement Sunday. "When ASAA works their regulations on their end it should include a waiver process that would allow ASAA to rule on those that may have transitioned their gender with puberty blockers or other forms of testosterone blockers prior to puberty. I think the boards main concern was safety and competition fairness. Also Title IX is currently going through regulation change that would allow and/or require some exclusions in the divisions between females and males due to safety and competition fairness rationale. With that being said I think our regulation aligns pretty close to where Title IX will be aligned."

The Alaska Family Council had collected more than 2,100 signatures on a petition to encourage the Board of Education to "save girls' sports," Barto said.

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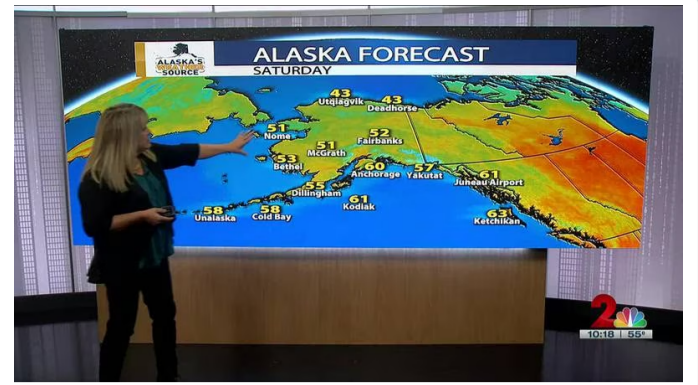
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