

Bill to ban transgender athletes in women's sports stalls in Utah legislature

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HB302 would have segregated Utah sports by sex, effectively banning transgender athletes with competing on the team that matched their gender identity (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer).

A bill that would have banned transgender students from playing in sports with cisgender teammates has now stalled in the Utah legislature and is unlikely to move forward as the session comes to a close. The bill, [HB302](#), is one of [two bills](#) related to transgender issues that has fallen short in the Utah legislature. The bill was intended to segregate sports by sex, preventing those who may identify as transgender from playing on a team that matches their preferred gender identity.

"Women's sports matter in Utah. They matter to me, they matter to parents, and they matter to athletes," Rep. Kera Birkeland said on the House floor. "These days, women's sports are about competition."

Transgender students are currently required to have been on hormone therapy for at least a year before they are allowed to participate in their self-identified gender's sports teams at school. According to the Utah High School Activities Association, there are no transgender athletes currently competing at a high school level in Utah.

The bill was one that faced sharp backlash from the LGBT community and its allies across Utah. The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah [encouraged supporters](#) to write in to their legislators and ask them to vote against the bill.

Concerns given by the ACLU included worries about the exclusion of women from sports they already compete in, as well as giving inappropriate power to coaches to question how "female" someone is before they compete.

Earlier last month, Gov. Spencer Cox said he would not sign the bill if it did not undergo multiple changes. Though many of those changes were made, Cox has yet to comment on the bill since. He did, however, give an emotional speech about the bill and the nuance he saw in it. "These kids are just trying to stay alive. There's a reason none of them are playing sports," Cox said. "I just think there is a better way, and I hope there will be enough grace to find a solution."