

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



P.O. Box 94004
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9004
(225) 342-7015
GOV.LA.GOV

June 6, 2022

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Page Cortez
Louisiana Senate President
Louisiana State Senate
Post Office Box 94183
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Senate Bill 44 of the 2022 Regular Session

Dear President Cortez:

Please be advised that Senate Bill 44 of the 2022 Regular Session has become law without my signature.

Although I vetoed this bill last legislative session, after prayerful thought and deliberation, it has become law this session without my signature. Despite it becoming law, I stand by my position on this issue over the last several years as it has been debated. This legislation unfairly targets vulnerable children who are already struggling with gaining acceptance in every aspect of their lives. Nevertheless, the legislature has made it clear over the last two regular legislative sessions that it believes the policy of the state should be to treat these children differently than who they really are. As I said last year, I do believe that there are many people who may have supported this bill who are good and decent Louisianans trying to do their best to address a complicated issue. While I disagree wholeheartedly with their approach, I have allowed this bill to become law.

This legislation has been marketed around the nation as being necessary to achieve “fairness in women’s sports”. We all want equality and fairness for our families, friends, and colleagues, whether it be through equal pay, equal treatment, and equal rights. All of which are real problems we are seeing in Louisiana right now and which I have fought to correct throughout my tenure as governor. What we are not seeing, however, is the problem this bill purportedly seeks to fix. It does not achieve its stated purpose for one simple reason – the problem doesn’t exist in our state because the Louisiana High School Athletics Association already has policies in place that prevent any unfair advantages in athletic competitions. Indeed, neither the author nor anyone else has identified any instances in Louisiana. What the bill does do, whether or not intended by those organizations and legislators around the nation pushing this legislation throughout the states, is lead many of our transgender youth to believe there is something wrong with them. It is unconscionable to have these organizations year after year continue to push this same legislation

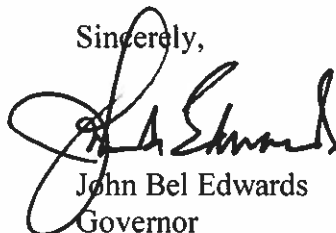
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to capitalize on this issue at the expense of these children who are just trying to learn how to live their everyday lives.

Furthermore, these bills are extremely divisive and fracture the legislative body when it should be working together to move Louisiana forward. These statements, however, are not meant to trivialize the very serious issues facing our transgender youth. It is my sincere hope that we as a state become more educated about our transgender community and the difficult and unique challenges they face. We should strive to be better and more understanding.

I believe in my heart that discrimination is not a Louisiana value. That remains true today. Nevertheless, after passing this legislation overwhelmingly in two consecutive regular legislative sessions, it is clearly the will of the legislature that this bill become law. Further, it is clear to me, both from the support for this bill and from private conversations with legislators, that Senate Bill 44 would have become law regardless of my action on it. I am hopeful that we can now move beyond the politics of this matter and return our focus to the real problems of the state. For these reasons, Senate Bill 44 has become law without my signature.

Sincerely,



John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Honorable Clay Schexnayder
Speaker of the House of Representatives