

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 47
FAIRNESS IN GIRLS' SPORTS ACT
January 31, 2024
House Ways and Means Committee

DEBBIE YATSUK
DISTRICT 30A, ANNAPOLIS

Good Afternoon,

I am Debbie Yatsuk from Annapolis, (shout out to Del Shaneka Henson, my delegate). I come before you as a parent of three daughters who played sports, one on the collegiate level, and as a current competitive athlete myself. I am NOT here to prevent anyone from playing sports, I encourage it! I am NOT here to be mean or called bad names. At issue is integrity in a specific arena of athletic competition – that of high school girl's varsity teams. I am standing up for girls, not against trans.

As a recreation director on Army bases in Germany, 23 years as the same with the City of Bowie, 27 years currently as a competitive rower, and a high school sports booster of a 3-sport female varsity athlete, I have seen pain and promise, success and failure in the competitive arena. But I have also seen the ability to provide recreational opportunities for all.

High School Varsity level competition, that we are specifically addressing here, does not include everyone. It involves a huge commitment of time, a high-level of ability to make the team, and then the intensity to handle the pressure. That is why there are so many other choices to participate in sports through recreational, community and social organizations. In fact, many kids say, as well as trans youth, that their reasons for sports participation include connecting with friends, opportunities for fitness and

the fun of participation. This especially can happen at levels of play where winning is not as important or athletic scholarships at stake.

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) in their guide for participation of transgender youth in interscholastic athletics states in:

- Principle #3 that “The integrity of women’s sports should be preserved.”
- Principle #5 that “Policies governing the participation in sports should be FAIR in light of the tremendous variation among individuals in strength, size, musculature and ability.” (This doesn’t even mention the advantage males have in cardio circulation and lung respiration rates that hormones cannot equalize).

TITLE IX was enacted to protect women’s rights and protections. Males have and can dominate. Forcing female athletes to compete against males is unfair. Twenty other states have adopted laws protecting women’s opportunities in athletics. Even though there is a wide-range of abilities within the sexes, single-sex varsity sports teams make sense. Though trans-men are not impacting men’s teams, trans-women are taking spots and awards from females who have worked long and hard to reach their abilities and goals. Therefore, it is time to develop a new approach as our population changes.

CO-ED sports teams can certainly accommodate different genders with rules to accommodate such. Current same-sex sports have varying rules and equipment depending on whether males or females are playing, but current co-ed teams use equipment and rules altered to take into account sex differences.

USROWING has implemented an **OPEN GENDER** category that creates a space for those athletes who are non-binary, gender diverse, bi-gender or intersex and choose not to race in the category of the sex assigned at birth.

I urge you not to undermine the efforts of our girls to compete against their own sex. Do not compromise female athletic opportunities and dreams of achievement and success when there are other solutions. Please vote favorable on this bill, and please read the brochure dropped off in all your offices on the second day of session titled: Boys Competing in Girls' Sports: Is it Fair? Tons of material is in there, including reference to the 2015 "MGA Report of the Task Force to Study Sports Injuries in High School Female Athletes" that is eye-opening.

Thank you very much.