

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 381
FAIRNESS IN GIRLS' SPORTS ACT

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Senate EEE Committee

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TODAY IS NATIONAL GIRLS & WOMEN IN SPORTS DAY! Started in 1987 in Washington, DC to celebrate the achievements of girls in sports and the continuing struggle for equality for women in sports.

I am Debbie Yatsuk from Annapolis. I am testifying as a parent of three daughters who played sports in high school, one on the collegiate level, and as a current competitive athlete. I am NOT trying to prevent anyone from playing sports, I encourage it! At issue is integrity in a specific arena of athletic competition – that of high school girls' varsity teams. I am standing up for girls, not against trans. This is not about exclusion, but to acknowledge differences. Remember, ***bodies play sports, not identities.***

High School Varsity level competition, that we are specifically addressing here, is not inclusive as 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 for everyone to participate in sports through recreational and community groups. 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.....and you won't get cut!

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."

Forcing female athletes to compete against males is unfair. Sex is a legal basis and the women's movement began for a reason. 25 other states have adopted laws protecting women's opportunities in sports. 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.

For example, **CO-ED sports teams** accommodate mixed genders with rules and equipment 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.

A study by the Women's Sports Federation shows that 16-17 year old girls are the most likely to quit sports due to lack of support, fear of failure, lack of confidence and school pressure. 1 in 20 participated in sports before Title IX, now 1 in 5 do. If they also have to deal with playing against biological boys who have an advantage or take their spot, and being told to accept it, that further disregards their dreams and pushes girls down again.

Whether you have daughters or not, whether you have competed at the varsity level or not, I respectfully ask that this bill be allowed to proceed to subcommittee where information can be looked at and discussed. High school girls, parents, coaches, and administrators, who want fairness for every student, at least deserve that.

Thank you very much.