

Good afternoon, my name is April and I'm a high school basketball player. I'm here today to provide my perspective on allowing men to compete in women's sports.

As a female athlete and a member of the women's basketball team, it is important that women have their own environment to train, practice and compete. We are built different, carry our emotions different, and require different mental health support than men. Each of these differences, and ALL of these differences together affect overall athletic performance.

At school, the men and women's basketball teams practice separately. Each team has a separate time slot to lift, shoot and scrimmage. I have watched the men practice and play many times and there is a sharp contrast. In the weight room and on the court, men on the basketball team are lifting heavier weights, running faster and jumping higher. Men have an advantage over women in all sports due to their muscle mass, their power and their endurance.

Men in women's sports can lead to unsafe situations. In a defensive situation, a man on a fast break running towards a woman defender under the basket, could potentially injure that woman. Men in women's sports can also lead to inappropriate situations. If men and women play a sport together on a team, sharing a locker room with those men could potentially lead to an uncomfortable encounter or comment. Women should be protected and feel safe in their athletic environments, before, during and after a game.

Keeping men and woman separate in sports protects the mental health of all athletes. There is already a high level of pressure to play a sport and balance academic classes. The pressure heightens when you add the possibility of playing against a man and sustaining an injury. This added factor can shatter a woman's confidence in her sport, her training and her athletic ability.

In high school and on many competitive sports teams, varsity spots are limited. If men are allowed to compete for those spots on women's sports teams that leaves less opportunities for those women. This would also reduce the chances for women to earn scholarships to play at the collegiate level.

Female athletes deserve to be proud of their effort, commitment and achievement. Women should not have to feel discouraged because they competed against someone who by nature can be stronger, faster and taller than them.

As a female, I deserve to be inspired by another female teammate, opponent or professional athlete who has achieved a milestone, not by a male athlete who reached that milestone by playing on a woman's team. I deserve to feel motivated by other female

athletes' accomplishments and use that motivation to push me to train harder and reach my own personal athletic goals. I am not inspired by a man's accomplishment when measured against a woman's standard. To have a dream shattered or an opportunity diminished because I am competing against a male athlete is discouraging and it is unfair.

Thank you for allowing me to speak here today to advocate and give women a voice, to preserve our safety and opportunity in sports, and to promote fairness in the student-athlete community.