

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the committee.

My name is Megan Stallard, and I am a sophomore at Poolesville high school in Montgomery County. I am also a rock climber. I'm writing today to urge an **unfavorable** report on SB0588.

First, I would like to explain why it's simply not true that transgender women have an "unfair advantage" in sports. I am a cisgender female, and I'm objectively stronger than most other athletes on my rock climbing team, even the 18 year old cisgender male. I haven't trained significantly more than any of them; I've actually trained less than most of them. I simply have a genetic predisposition to building muscle faster, an "advantage". Should this disqualify me from competing in women's categories in rock climbing? If you answer that it shouldn't, you agree that the standard of "fairness" in sports is arbitrary; genetic factors influence all athletes' performance. Thus, the claim that allowing transgender women to compete in women's sports is "unfair" is based not in fact but in prejudice.

Any efforts to reduce the genetic advantage of trans athletes should come not through excluding them but through continuing to allow hormone therapy to be administered to minors by licensed medical professionals, which entails opposing SB0948. In fact, the Canadian Center for Ethics in Sport [reported](#) that trans women who have undergone hormone suppression do not have better performance than cis women.

Next, I would like to discuss one of the most pressing concerns with this legislation: its impact on the mental health of transgender people. As it stands, trans people are at an incredibly high risk for mental health problems due to the stigma and prejudice they face. In fact, 82% of trans individuals have experienced suicidal ideation, and 40% have attempted suicide, [according to NIH](#). [According to the Trevor Project](#), recent anti-trans legislation at the state level has negatively impacted the mental health of transgender and nonbinary people. And [experts](#) such as James McGraw from the University of Maryland Prevention Research Center believe that specifically anti-trans sports legislation has the potential to increase the risk of death by suicide among trans people. Senators, I ask you: is upholding an arbitrary standard of "fairness" in women's sports really worth risking the lives of so many transgender people?

In practice, competitive rock climbing is an example of a transgender-inclusive system that works. USA Climbing allows transgender athletes to compete in girl's categories. It's worth noting here that laws excluding transgender athletes promote harmful "gender policing" policies. For example, an anti-trans athlete law in Idaho created invasive testing policies which violated the privacy of cisgender women as well. On the other hand, in the trans-inclusive system of rock climbing, I have never felt unsafe. I have never felt that there is an unfair advantage given to trans athletes. I have never known anyone to take advantage of inclusivity policies to get a medal in a competition. Perhaps more strikingly, I have never even come across a trans athlete in a competition, to my knowledge, which leads me to my next point. Let me be very clear: this bill affects so few athletes that it is, more than anything else, a political statement. A statement that is hurtful and damaging to one of the most vulnerable groups in our nation. Thus, I urge an unfavorable report in committee on SB0588. Thank you.