

Testimony from Brooke Berquist for Senate Bill 588

My name is Brooke Berquist and I reside in Bishopville, Maryland. I was born and raised in the state of Maryland and I have attended Maryland public schools throughout my life. Currently, I am a senior at Stephen Decatur High School in Berlin, Maryland.

On behalf of all biological female athletes in the state of Maryland, I urge you to consider passing Senate Bill 588.

My position in favor of this bill comes from my experience as a high school athlete and an athlete in travel sports. I have competed in numerous sports from my childhood until now, and, in high school, I have participated in three sports: volleyball, basketball, and tennis. While competing in a travel volleyball tournament last year, my team had a match with an opposing team, whose roster included a biological male in the starting lineup. While the other team was warming up, my teammates and I immediately noticed the strength and speed with which the biological male hit the volleyball. It was apparent that the skills of the biological male surpassed anyone else on the court. My teammates and I were not only intimidated, but we feared for our safety. There is very little time to react to a volleyball when it is spiked over the net, and if you are not prepared or if you do not have the reaction time to get underneath the ball, you are in jeopardy of getting hit. My teammates and I simply did not have an answer for the hits from the biological male. Needless to say, we did not win our match against that team.

As I reflect upon that time, I believe that my teammates and I were already defeated when we walked onto the court. First, our confidence was struck down because we knew we were not ready for the level of competition that the biological male brought. While our skill set may have matched, our strength did not. Secondly, we played with fear, which is not a winning recipe. My teammates and I had never experienced such speed and force in hitting, and we were concerned about bigger issues than just winning the match. I realize that this encounter did not occur in the public school arena, but it could without proper legislation in place.

As a three sport athlete in high school, I am very familiar with the level of play of biological males in several sports. In basketball, biological male players typically run faster, shuffle faster, pass harder, jump higher, box out more strongly, and/or dunk. In tennis, male players typically serve the ball harder, get to the ball more quickly, hit ground and backstrokes with greater force, and hit overhead smashes harder and faster. I believe that in every varsity sport in my high school, a competitive biological male athlete possesses the muscle mass, fast twitch muscle fibers, and sheer strength to out compete most of the biological female athletes.

In summary, including biological males in female sports does not establish a level playing field for biological females. For those athletes who play with a biological male on their own team, they face the possibility of losing starting positions or even positions on the team, reduced playing time and time on task, participating in individual events where they could win medals, and loss of confidence. Additionally, there are logistical issues of dressing and undressing in

team locker rooms. For those female athletes who aspire to go on to play at the collegiate level, they face unfair competition where game losses or lost positions on teams may have seismic impacts upon their careers. Perhaps more significantly, they face the possibility of losing athletic scholarships because of all of the aforementioned consequences. Finally, for those athletes who play against biological males, they face the possibility of suffering injuries against a significantly stronger and faster opponent.

This is not a complicated bill. It is simple. If we are going to label sports for boys and girls, then let's make sure that the participants in each are biologically consistent with the category.

Thank you for your consideration.