



TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY PAULA SCANLAN

Maryland House Ways and Means Committee

January 27, 2024

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 156 and encourage the committee to consider including protections for female college athletes to truly protect all athletes.

I'm Paula Scanlan, an Ambassador for Independent Women and a former NCAA swimmer for the University of Pennsylvania.

In September 2021, Lia (formerly Will) Thomas switched from the Penn Men's team to the women's team. While Will had been an average swimmer on the men's team, Lia soon racked up personal best times in every freestyle event that were faster than the Women's world records.

While many of you already know this story and the countless other stories of female athletes falling victim to sex-discrimination at the hand of "inclusive policies," what you do not hear often enough are the experiences of the women off the podium. I'd like to share one of mine from my time on the University of Pennsylvania swim team.

My teammates and I were forced to undress in the presence of Lia, a six-foot four-inch tall man fully-intact with male genitalia, 18 times per week. Some girls opted to change in bathroom stalls and others used the family bathroom to avoid this. When we tried to voice our concern to the Athletic Department, we were told that Lia swimming and being in our locker room was non-negotiable and we were offered psychological services to attempt to re-educate us to become comfortable with the idea of undressing in front of a male.

One may ask, why do I speak so passionately about issues that seem hypothetical or that some may perceive as impacting only a small number of women? This is not hypothetical, this is real. I know women who have lost roster spots and spots on the podium. I know of women with sexual trauma who are adversely impacted by having biological males in their locker room without their consent.

And I am one of these women. I was sexually assaulted on June 3, 2016.

I share my experience today to qualify why it is so important for the Maryland legislature to pass HB 156. If passed into law, this bill would protect women's sports. This bill will safeguard female sports and locker rooms at the high school level, but should also protect collegiate athletes.

This bill isn't about exclusion; it's about preserving the integrity behind women's sports to provide a space where female athletes can compete fairly and safely. It clearly demonstrates Maryland's interest in maintaining women's sports in order to protect privacy, fairness, safety, and equal opportunity.

This bill shouldn't be controversial. I applaud Delegate Kathy Szeliga for introducing it, and this should be something that all of her colleagues can support. Because ***if we can't protect women's sports, Maryland will have no way to preserve women's opportunities and safety. Stand with the over 3 million women and girls in Maryland and support HB 156 today.***

Thank you.