



TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY PAYTON MCNABB

Maryland House Ways and Means Committee

January 27, 2024

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Payton McNabb. I graduated from Hiwassee Dam High School in Murphy, North Carolina, and am an Ambassador at Independent Women. I urge you to pass House Bill 156 to protect female athletes like me.

On Sept 1st, 2022, I was struck in the head by a spiked ball during a volleyball game by a male on the opposing team. As a result of the sheer impact of the ball, I received a concussion and neck injury.

I love sports—the camaraderie, discipline, the team bonding, and the confidence for the future. I was a 3 sport athlete in high school—participating in softball, basketball, and volleyball.

I was always very aware of the possibility of injury during competitive play, but my experience on the court that day was different. The hit was so violent that I was knocked unconscious, lying in a fencing position for over 30 seconds. Years later, my body and mind are still recovering from the hit. I still suffer from partial paralysis on my right side, vision problems, cognitive issues, constant headaches, and more.

This incident was 100% avoidable if my rights as a female athlete had not been excluded on the basis of being inclusive to allow a male to compete with women. I nor my teammates ever agreed to play against a male athlete. We were forced to by our state athletic association.

If the adults in the room don't start standing up and putting an end to this senseless threat to females, there won't be women's sports. Women have a right to a fair and equal opportunity on and off the playing field. Men have no place in our single-sex spaces.

I love being an athlete, as do the other girls I play with. I write to you today to represent not just myself but to ensure all female athletes—my little sister, my cousins, my teammates—have access to fair competition.

Women deserve to compete on a level playing field without fear of injury. I may be one of the first to come before you with an injury, but I can assure you I will not be the last if we don't protect female athletes. This is why it is crucial that you pass House Bill 126 to prevent other high school athletes from suffering from injuries such as my own. To fully protect the fairness and opportunities of female athletes across Maryland, I encourage you to add protections for female college athletes as well.

Thank you.