

Good afternoon, my name is April Bondurant 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. The purpose of this bill is not to discriminate against anyone. The purpose of this bill IS to create a level playing field without injury, and to increase the opportunity for girls in competitive sports.

As a female athlete and captain of the Stephen Decatur women's basketball team, I understand firsthand why it is essential for women to have a distinct environment to compete. Women are built differently — physically, mentally, and emotionally — and those differences matter in athletics.

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 male athletes practice and play many times and there is a sharp contrast. In the weight room and on the court, men on the basketball team, for instance, are lifting heavier weights, running faster and jumping higher. Men have an advantage over women due to their muscle mass, and their endurance.

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's athletic spaces are not about exclusion; they are about empowerment. This space should promote an environment tailored to our needs, allowing us to feel safe before, during and after a game.

This bill seeks to keep men and women separate in sports which will protect 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, varsity spots are limited. If men are allowed to compete for those spots that leaves less opportunities for women. This also reduces 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 and not feel discouraged because they competed against those who have advantages in strength, speed, or size.

I deserve to be inspired by a female athlete who has achieved a milestone, not by a male athlete who reached milestones by playing on a woman's team.

I am NOT inspired by a man's accomplishment when measured against a woman's standard. To have an opportunity diminished because I am competing against a male athlete is discouraging and it is simply 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.