

Good afternoon,

My name is Brandi Castaneda, and I am the Women's Field Hockey Coach at Pocomoke High School. I urge you to vote favorable on SB 50, the Fairness in Girls' Sports Act.

Our varsity women's field hockey team has earned 22 Maryland 1A State Championships. But the greatest victories I've witnessed were never the trophies. They were the moments young women discovered their strength, their confidence, and their place on the field.

For decades, women's sports have existed to provide biological female athletes a fair opportunity to compete and grow. As a coach, I feel a responsibility to protect that opportunity and science helps us understand why these separate spaces were created.

Research on high school-aged athletes shows that significant physical differences develop during puberty. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, testosterone levels in teenage boys increase dramatically during adolescence, leading to greater muscle mass, strength, and speed. Studies of athletes ages 14 to 18 show boys demonstrate 5 to 10 percent faster sprint speeds, 11 to 21 percent greater jumping power, and significantly greater overall strength compared to girls of the same age and training level.

Research on adolescent performance also shows that by the late teenage years, boys develop higher aerobic capacity meaning greater endurance because of larger heart and lung size and higher oxygen-carrying capacity. These differences directly affect sports like field hockey, which demand explosive speed, powerful hits, and sustained endurance throughout the game.

During the 2023 season, our team was versed with another team that rostered an athlete who was born male on their team. During that competition, I watched our typically confident and fearless players cower away from tackles, shots and finishing plays against this individual. They knew this athlete, both teams being from small towns on the Eastern Shore, and many were his friends with this individual off of the field, but they responded to their fear and showed their lack of confidence while facing him in play. His perceived strength, speed and agility created a completely different competition and perceivably removed the fairness and safety from the sport they loved. To demonstrate, one goal was scored because not one of our players would stand in front of the high speed ball. Additionally, during play, another high speed ball struck one of our athletes removing her from the game. These incidents occur in sports but it is no coincidence that both occurrences involved the player that was born male.

I've dedicated my life to coaching young women who wake up before sunrise to train, who push themselves through exhaustion and who trust that when they step onto the field, the competition will be fair. They deserve a level playing field and one where their effort, discipline, and determination define their success.

Girls' sports were created to give female athletes equal opportunity to compete, to lead, and to excel. Preserving that opportunity means recognizing the physical realities faced by high school athletes and ensuring that every young woman has the chance to compete in an environment built for fairness and safety.

As a coach, as a mentor, and as someone who has spent decades guiding young women, I believe we must continue protecting the purpose of female athletics to give every biological female the chance to play, to grow, and to succeed.

Thank you.

Works Cited

American College of Sports Medicine. The Biological Basis of Sex Differences in Athletic Performance: Consensus Statement. American College of Sports Medicine, 2023.