Testimony in Opposition to SB0050:
Education – Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams and Sports - Designation (Fairness in Girls' Sports Act)

February 18, 2026

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Emily Shaw, I am a resident of Montgomery County, and I ask you to oppose SB 50. I do so primarily because I do not want us to give in to a national hate campaign that is being strategically and ruthlessly waged against transgender youth in America.

In 2024, Republicans spent at least $215 million on anti-trans advertising to vilify this tiny and already stigmatized group of Americans who make up about 1% of our population.

In the past year, the President of the United States has taken dozens of separate executive actions to restrict the rights and freedoms of transgender people. These actions range from forcibly detransitioning trans women in federal prison and removing rules protecting them from rape to seeking to end payments from Medicare and Medicaid - our national health insurance systems - to any hospital or provider that offers gender-affirming care to youth. Gender-affirming care is a type of health care which, despite the impact of that astonishing $215 million spend, all major medical and psychological associations continue to identify as safe, effective, and essential to young trans people's well-being.

Just a month ago, the US House of Representatives passed the grotesquely named "Protect Children's Innocence" bill that makes parents' support for providing gender affirming health care to their children a crime punishable by 10 years in prison. These sorts of provisions currently exist in some places in America. Tennessee last year enacted legislation that penalizes those who help trans youth obtain their health care with 15 years in prison.

Just last week, Kansas lawmakers in both houses voted to revoke the driver's license of any trans person who has a correct gender marker on it. ("Fairness in Women's Driving," I guess.)

I could go on for quite a while with additional evidence of the nature of the current nightmare that is the political environment for trans people, but I trust that I've conveyed the essence of it. Let me just stipulate here that none of it really seems very "fair" right now.

What does this have to do with the "Fairness in Girls Sports Act"?

The "Fairness in Girls Sports Act" was born in Idaho in 2020, produced by a Republican legislator working with the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), an SPLC-designated hate group that developed the original North Carolina anti-trans bathroom bill in 2014. When they're not busy destroying women's right to abortion (ADF was the organization leading arguments in

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, the case that overturned Roe v. Wade, and they are currently leading the recent national case to ban mifepristone), they work to strip rights from LGBT people. SPLC notes that the ADF has "supported the recriminalization of homosexuality in the U.S. and criminalization abroad; has defended state-sanctioned sterilization of trans people abroad; has linked homosexuality to pedophilia and claims that a 'homosexual agenda' will destroy Christianity and society." In service of this, for example, ADF led the 2018 Masterpiece Bakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission case to deny goods and services to LGBT people on the basis of religion.

The ADF and its affiliates provide strategic support to anti-trans legislators nationally, including by guiding them in the language they're using. This explains why you will not hear the proponents of this bill use the term "transgender" when they're talking about the subjects of the bill. National advocates like Richard Mast of Liberty Counsel advise anti-trans legislators to avoid saying the words transgender, cisgender, or non-binary and instead to use hate terms (which is how GLAAD identifies the term "biological male") that dehumanize the people they're referencing.

Starting in 2021, the ADF has helped to spread the bill you have before you across the country, providing model legislation (identical language from this bill is in many other state bill trackers), litigation and hearing testimony. USA Today explored the testimony that was provided and found that a number of the individual examples provided in "Fairness in Girls Sports Act" legislative hearings were either untrue or overstated, including identifying cisgender girls with short hair as transgender or describing individuals who did not exist. As described in the article "Lawmakers can't cite local examples of trans girls in sports," the Associated Press asked bill sponsors in two dozen states to identify a case from within their own state that the legislation would address and almost none could.

And despite the fact that this bill has been brought before you five times, you will in fact not be hearing about anything but imaginary, witch-hunt-like fears of tall girls or short-haired girls or muscular girls occurring on Maryland playing fields. This is not a bill that solves a problem that exists in Maryland. Trans girls absolutely should be able to play with their friends on school teams, for all the reasons that other testimony will provide, and they should be able to do so without a legal or media circus being made of their lives. That is the opposite of what this bill does. This is a bill that helps to further a very expensive, very expansive national campaign that has been initiated to drive transgender people, and particularly transgender youth, out of regular life.

I urge you to oppose SB 50 in this and every subsequent year it's brought before you.