

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 50
Education – Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams and Sports –
Designation (Fairness in Girls’ Sports Act)

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 18, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

My name is Lisa Klingenmaier, and I am writing in strong opposition to SB 50, which would harm all athletes in Maryland by requiring school teams, varsity teams and junior varsity youth sports to be designated based on biological sex.

I have a background in social work and public health, and have played team sports – including school-sponsored sports – as a cisgender athlete my entire life. I played softball on my public school team growing up and have maintained connections with my teammates from those teams 25 years later. As an adult, I have continued to play softball in an all-gender league for the past 20 summers, and my teammates are an integral part of my support system. More recently, I have started playing roller derby with Patuxent Roller Derby, which is a supportive, welcoming, and competitive environment for athletes of all genders.

Sports are fundamentally about community and well-being, not fairness. The purpose of youth sports is to teach social skills, instill responsibility, build physical fitness, and bolster individual confidence – benefits to which all youth should have equal access. Sports foster community and a sense of belonging, which are fundamental for human well-being. SB 50 undermines these goals by mantling “fairness” as the pinnacle value of sports. Indeed, claims of fairness at any level of sport require bracketing of substantial conditions: Michael Phelps physiology alone - including a wingspan three inches longer than his height¹ and lactic acid production that is half of a typical elite athlete² - gives him an innate advantage, which can hardly be seen as “fair”.

SB 50 – under the banner of “fairness” – ostracizes transgender and gender nonconforming students from important community spaces. This bill seeks a dubious ideal of fairness at the expense of participation and inclusion, which are critical for the physical and mental health of all young people. Shamefully, transphobic attitudes and practices limit the inclusive spaces available to some young people – with grave results. Alternatively, transgender youth who find their schools affirming and inclusive are significantly less likely to attempt suicide.³ Denying transgender and intersex youth the ability to play on sports teams that match their gender identity invalidates their identity and causes – tragically, sometimes deadly – harm. Athletes of all genders in Maryland should have access to the sports and facilities that are readily available to cisgender athletes.

At its core, SB 50 institutionalizes discrimination of marginalized genders and harmfully centers body scrutiny. SB 50 is one bill in a wave of legislative proposals that are hostile towards transgender and gender nonconforming Marylanders, seeking to marginalize and divide communities instead of fostering diversity and inclusion. Based in fear and animosity, SB 50 will

harm all athletes as bodies are put under scrutiny, potentially subjecting students to invasive and degrading physical exams to “prove” who does and doesn’t “belong.” This will fall disproportionately on Black and Brown girls and women, as girls of color are more likely to be questioned about their gender presentation and have been subjected to a long history of racialized gender policing.⁴

Anti-trans legislation – like SB 50 – lays the groundwork for a culture of exclusion and marginalization: that is not the Maryland I want to live, work and play in. As a person with expertise in social work and public health, I know that is not the foundation of a healthy Maryland with thriving people and communities. As an athlete, I have found spaces where people of all ages, genders, races, sizes, and backgrounds come together to learn and play sports we love. Roller derby is such a space – one in which people are celebrated for who they are. It would be an immeasurably bleaker space if trans athletes were excluded, denied opportunities to develop an interest in derby, and never became my teammates. I am a better player, a better teammate, and a better person because of sports like roller derby where all gender minorities are welcome, and I strongly oppose SB 50 for all the ways it will undermine and harm the people, sports and communities that make Maryland beautiful.

I strongly urge an unfavorable report on SB 50. Thank you for your consideration.

Lisa Klingenmaier, MSW, MPH

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District 40 Resident

Happy Go Loki, PRD

¹ Most people have nearly identical height to arm-length.

² Science ABC. 2024. Scientific Analysis of Michael Phelps Body Structure.

<https://www.scienceabc.com/sports/michael-phelps-height-arms-torso-arm-span-feet-swimming.html>

³ The Trevor Project. 2024. *2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People*.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/#suicide-by-gender>

⁴ PBS. 2024. For women athletes of color, outsized scrutiny over gender is nothing new, historians say.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/for-women-athletes-of-color-outsized-scrutiny-over-gender-is-nothing-new-historians-say>