

Senator Hughes' Public Testimony to Alaska Schools Activities Association 5-1-2023

Good morning/afternoon. I'm Shelley Hughes, Senator for District M. I carried the bill to protect girls' sports that had the votes last spring to pass but got caught up in the legislative session endgame. I want to point out that before Title IX in 1972 only 300,000 females played school sports in the US. When I was a teenager, my only option was to be a cheerleader for the boys' teams. Thankfully because of Title IX under ASAA's leadership, my daughter got to play varsity basketball in high school in Alaska. Today the number of female athletes in our nation has increased by over 900 percent to more than 3.5 million thanks to the girls-only-on-girls'-teams and equal opportunity policy that ensured fair and safe competition for females.

I know you didn't step up to your board role to be inundated with emotional arguments to try to convince you that females need to accommodate biological males, but I believe you are concerned like most Alaskans about the future of girls' sports and have kept, and will keep, your eyes on the ball in these deliberations, using logic and reason rather than being swayed by emotional tugs on your heartstrings. You know like I do, that if the proposed bylaw change before you is *not* adopted, we will lose an even-playing field in sports for girls and females *will* face discrimination.

Alaska is not immune to the ever-increasing trend of biological males seeking spots on young women's sports teams and you are wise to address this issue earlier rather than later. Girls and women should not be robbed of the chance to be selected for a team, to have playing time on the court or the field, to win a championship, or to be awarded a college scholarship due to the physical advantages of biological males.

Research shows that even after a decade or more of testosterone suppression, the biological male still has a more massive heart, more extensive lung and oxygen capacity, larger bone structure, and greater muscle mass – 5 to 7 percent more. The difference between male and females' bodies is undeniable. Case in point: many male high school track and field athletes *consistently beat the times* of the best female Olympians who've trained intensely for years!

Do not buy the argument that the bylaw change would preclude certain athletes from competition or equal access to sports. That simply is not true. Every. Single. Athlete would have ample opportunities to participate in school sports. And allow me here to put on the record that I am NOT transphobic. I care for, love, and value every person unconditionally, every student no matter what.

You may be told that this policy could increase depression and suicide among students with gender dysphoria. The truth is that depression rates and suicide ideation are *also* trending alarmingly upward among teenage girls. Trying to address mental health issues for a small group of youth through a policy that is unfair and unsafe for girls not only does not solve the depression and suicide issue for the small group, but it exacerbates the depression and suicide problem for the entire teenage female group while also creating unfair and unsafe conditions for girls which rob them of opportunities. Trying to fix one problem by creating another is clearly not the answer, especially when the attempt won't work anyway.

And let's not forget that the policy you will be setting will have ramifications as far as protecting girls' dignity and privacy in the locker room, the showers, and the bathrooms while participating in sports, not to mention for sleeping arrangements when teams travel for away-games.

In conclusion, honored Board Members, for decades biological, sex-specific separations in athletics have preserved competition and given girls fair opportunities for victories and athleticism. The great triumph and success of millions of females in athletics must not be discarded in the name of politics. Thank you for standing with our girls and young women, our female athletes by adopting the proposed bylaw change to protect girls' sports in our schools.