

To the Senate Education Committee, Senator Baumgardner, Chair:

My name is Ann Harms, and I am from Wichita. I am a third-degree black belt in Taekwondo, certified by the Kukkiwon (World Taekwondo Headquarters). I began my martial arts training at the age of ten, and now at age forty, I am an instructor myself, teaching students once a week.

I agreed to write testimony in support of the Fairness in Women's Sports Act because I am alarmed at all the negative effects that allowing biological males to compete in women's divisions would cause, and how all these negative outcomes will hurt girls in multiple ways, ultimately discouraging them out of participation in sports.

Firstly, as a martial artist, I know how dangerous it would be to allow biological males to compete against women in contact sports like Taekwondo sparring competitions. I have sparred against men in class since I was a teenager, but they know to hold back in that situation. No one holds back in a competition when they are trying to win, though, even if their opponent is no match for them. I know this from personal experience, having been matched up in one of my very first tournament sparring competitions with a young lady who, in her own training, was concentrating on sparring with the hope of one day making the national team. I hoped that since we knew one another, she would hold back for my sake, and even joked with her, "You know I'll be an easy win for you. Just don't kill me!"

But this was a competition, and she wanted to spar the winner of another division in the next round, so in order to ensure she won our round, she competed hard. I was on the receiving end of several head kicks, and the match was finally called when she kicked me so hard in the midsection that the wind was knocked out of me and I could not breathe.

This happened to me when sparring against another female. If a female was put up against a male, with his superior biological strength, stature, muscle mass, and other advantages, which are not negated by hormone treatments or gender identity, she could be seriously injured. The imbalance would be even greater than between this young woman and myself, and as my experience demonstrates, *competitors do not hold back when they want to win a competition*. Even if the female was not injured, there is a good chance she would lose to the male.

If any legislator thinks that I am being overwrought, and that biological males would not be allowed to compete in contact sports against women even without this legislation, I would ask why. Either these transgender persons are truly females without undue advantage—in which case it would be fine to pit them against biological females in contact sports—or one must admit they *do* have inherent strength advantages which would make them a danger to biological females—in which case, why should they be allowed to compete against biological females in *any* sport in which speed and strength (as opposed to technique only, such as in riding, shooting, or Taekwondo forms) are germane? What would be the criteria for saying a biological male could participate in

sport A but not sport B? Any criteria at all is an admission there is an important difference which is a cause for concern because it would place biological females at a clear disadvantage.

The idea that a girl or woman might have to choose between going up against a male and having a high chance of getting injured and/or losing, or forfeiting a competition to protect herself, is terrible to me. What is even the point of having women's sports if they are not reserved solely for biological women, both for reasons of fairness and safety? In places like Connecticut where biological males who consider themselves female are already allowed to compete in women's divisions, young ladies are losing their records, championships, placements, qualifications, and opportunities. Everything is being taken away from them despite their best efforts. The ultimate result of this will be the destruction of women's sports and the demoralization of girls and women wherever it is allowed to happen.

Learning and practicing the martial art of Taekwondo has had an immeasurable impact on my life. As a small, shy young girl without much strength, participating in team sports in school only embarrassed me, but in Taekwondo class, I could just concentrate on learning more and improving my skills. I knew I could advance in rank and even become a black belt eventually if I just worked hard. It taught me good lessons in short- and long-term goal setting and gave me a sense of tremendous achievement, especially when I finally became a black belt. Taekwondo has helped make me the person I am today. It has made me stronger physically and mentally. It has taught me valuable self-defense skills and given me the attitude that I will never be a victim if I can help it. Taekwondo contributed significantly to the process of my small, shy self transforming into a confident and tenacious woman.

I know that participation in sports has provided countless girls with benefits like these and others. What if a girl missed out those benefits because she knew she would be competing against biological males and figured "why bother?", or was worried about getting hurt? In my view, this would be a tragedy. So in fidelity to both science and women's rights, I support the Fairness in Women's Sports Act.

Sincerely,
Ann Harms