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Sent: Thu, 10 Jun 2021 19:08:00 +0000
To: T9PublicHearing
Subject: Written Comment: Title IX Public Hearing (topic: gender identity)

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Regarding the inclusion of gender identity in proposed changes to Title IX, I would like to make my opinion known that it would be insidious discrimination against natal women and our right to participate as a protected class in sports with and against members of our own sex. I am a former NCAA athlete who benefited directly from Title IX's provisions for female sports, without which my sport - rowing - would have only been an intramural sport at my football-focused university, if it existed at all. I also, while strong and capable for a woman, would not have had a chance of competing against bodies that were born male and went through male puberty. There is a marked difference in race times between men and women in rowing.

While it is true that not all women can be star athletes, and thus some people will always be excluded, the difference between natal men and natal women is real and distinct. Sex-based differences have a massive impact on sports performance, not least in rowing. Sex-based height - which is not altered in natal males by estrogen - and sex-based strength - which is not brought down to natal female levels by estrogen in natal males would both confer advantages to natal males, regardless of their gender identity, that would provide any team with natal males a noticeable advantage. It is not hard to image that overriding sex-based protections could quickly change the makeup of rowing teams - and almost every women's sport - across the NCAA, potentially resulting in the drastic reduction of natal female participation in rowing - and thus completely negating the intent of Title IX. In that case, girls and women will have no chance at all against people who were born into male bodies. NO natal born girls or women will be star athletes at that point. Girl's and women's sports will become a farce. Natal born girls and women will have no chance at scholarships, or even distinction. This may seem hyperbolic to people just wishing to be kind, but it's already happening that people who were born into male bodies are taking first place in women's competitions in multiple sports and around the world.

Sex is a biological distinction that is based in physical realities that go down to the core of every human cell, and cannot be changed except at a superficial level, and thus, sex should be treated distinctly from the more ephemeral idea of gender identity, which is based on feelings, likes, preferences, desires, and wishes - that is, personality. To steamroll over protected rights based on personality, or what some people wish were true or not true, is utterly unethical. Sex-based rights are an established legal precedent, including in international agreements such as the Geneva Convention. It is regressive, not progressive, to eliminate such rights in the name of being kind.

Furthermore, the current push to enshrine gender identity as a protected characteristic is teaching gender-nonconforming children that they cannot be who they are in personality and still accept their own bodies. Girls who prefer to play with "boys" toys and wear shorts, and boys who like "girls" toys and clothing are being encouraged to think of themselves as being the opposite sex, even though this can never actually be true. Instead of encouraging acceptance for all girls and boys regardless of personality, and eliminating gender conformity, the idea of gender identity enshrines gender stereotypes as truth. Gender identity encourages children to transform their bodies physically, rather than encouraging society to accept gender nonconformity and eliminate stereotypes. The idea that someone can be born in the wrong body and thus must change their body to be who they really are is one of the most regressive and horrific ideas of modern times, and the federal government should not, in any way, be propagating this idea. We should be teaching children how to love and accept themselves as they ARE, as whole beings, rather than creating a farce in which everyone pretends that reality does not exist.

Due to the hostility currently present against women in American society, and the fact that these comments will be part of public record, I will refrain from providing further detailed identifying information. That our government has allowed such a climate of fear to grow among women who trying to protect our own rights and spaces, without trying to hurt or harass anyone else, is devastating. The right to hold and express one's own opinion is a cornerstone of democracy. Thank you for allowing these comments anonymously so that I need not put my family or friends at risk from harassment. Thank you for your time.

A female American citizen, athlete, and mother