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Sent: Sun, 6 Jun 2021 20:14:31 +0000 (UTC)
To: T9PublicHearing
Subject: Save Women's Sports

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In high school, I was a runner. It is not an exaggeration or bragging to say that I won everything. From my first race in 6th grade through high school graduation, I was undefeated. I earned twelve state championships. I was, quite simply, the best female runner in my State. Even with all that, I would not have been competitive against even the lowest varsity male runner. Fortunately, I didn't have to be. Being part of a girls-only athletic team in high school gave me the drive and discipline to become a 3X Olympian. Most of my teammates did not compete in the Olympics, but we all benefitted from being on the team. We each learned vital lessons about health and fitness, caring for our bodies, and pushing ourselves to be the best. But without sex-specific sports, none of that would've happened. Many of the girls I raced with in high school and college would not have made the team, let alone been competitive racing against boys. Abundant research documents the biological reality that male bodies are simply more powerful than female bodies. As we've seen over and over in recent years, male athletes consistently displace even top female athletes. It's not a fair contest.

Sometimes, school and state officials try to even the playing field by requiring transgender athletes to take hormone-altering drugs - drugs with many dangerous side effects. Forcing young athletes to take these drugs in order to compete with the girls cultivates the idea that drugs have a place in athletics

When I attended College, it was on an athletic scholarship. This scholarship never would have been available without Title IX. I never would have received an education without Title IX. Without Title IX, I never would have received the coaching that allowed me excel in cycling, Title IX was why I was in 3 Olympics, 10 World Championships with multiple World Medals, 2 Tour de Frances.

When I first started racing, there were few female professional cyclists. More than once, I trained or competed with the men. As a woman at the elite level, I could train with the men, but I never would've made the men's team. Male athletes compete on another level that a woman will never attain.

High school girls today are being robbed of opportunities to compete and learn. Every athlete knows that sports aren't just about winning. They're about pushing oneself, growing, developing discipline, doing one's best. But sports are, by nature, competitive. If a female athlete thinks she has a chance to get on the podium, she will push herself harder than she thought was possible. But if she shows up to find she has absolutely no chance of winning against her opponent's innate biological advantage, eventually she will stop competing.

Too many mothers are telling me that their daughters aren't even bothering to try out. They know it's not fair, there will be arguments, accusations of transphobia and our next generation of women athletes are simply walking away from sports.

It's time for schools, states, and athletic organizations to reaffirm that girls deserve their own sports. That can be done without sidelining transgender athletes, or forcing them to take drugs to change their bodies. Transgender athletes, like female athletes, deserve their own athletic class. All athletes—male, female, or transgender—want fair competition. They want to go out and do their best to win. They want their teammates pushing them towards greatness, on and off the field. But when we trample on women's and girls' sports, we trample on fairness. We drive women out of sports. And eventually, if we don't create a system that is fair for all athletes, women's sports will disappear entirely.

Inga Thompson

3X Olympian

10 World Team Member

3X World's Silver Medalist

2 X Women's Tour de France member, stage winner, podium finish

Winner of Women's Longest Stage Race in the World, 1990 Women's Ore-Ida