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LD 1337

The supporters of transgender athletics bans say that they are “protecting” women and ensuring fairness, but the idea that it’s unfair for cisgender women to compete with other athletes only holds water if you believe that cis women are inherently weaker than other people. When I was in college I played co-ed full-contact sports, and I can say with certainty that assigned sex at birth has nothing to do with a person’s athletic ability. The most formidable members of my team and any team we faced were often cisgender women, even against cisgender men nearly a foot taller, and as someone assigned female at birth I personally never felt intimidated or outmatched by anyone assigned male unless they’d been playing sports longer than me. In contrast, I regularly heard cis men say they were intimidated by cis women players. I also never felt unsafe facing physically larger or more experienced players (even when tackling!) because everyone on the field was invested in ensuring the safety of other players, and because the coaches of every team in the sport were strict about punitive action for anyone found to be using unnecessary force even once.

If people truly wanted fair sports, all teams would be co-ed and sorted into divisions by height or weight, but issues of fairness only ever come up relating to transgender athletes. In the Olympics, for example, it is common for a sports team from the Netherlands to be on average five inches taller than a sports team from Guatemala, yet people only ever claim a player has a biological advantage if they were born with different genitalia. The highest gendered difference I can find in a comprehensive adult athletic performance study is under 10%, and the highest in a gradeschool aged study is 5%, with many studies showing little to no difference. Most notably, none of these studies took funding or body size into account, and cisgender men receive significantly more funding and encouragement and are on average 10% taller than cisgender women— and only outperformed them in the relatively few sports where size is an advantage.

While hormone replacement therapy does drastically changes transgender women’s muscle and bone mass, even if a trans woman is not medically transitioning it is not at all unfair for her to be on a women’s sports team. Excluding transgender women from women’s sports is not only unconstitutional discrimination, it is an insult to the strength, abilities, and confidence of all cisgender women in sports, who would absolutely go toe-to-toe with their cisgender male peers if given the chance, as well as to our cis women firefighters, first responders, and veterans, who have literally carried cis men on their backs in service. By passing LD 1337, Maine would be unambiguously signing into law that we believe cisgender women are inherently weak and sending a strong message to every cis woman and girl in the state: “Other people will always be better than you.” I would be ashamed to live somewhere like that.