

I attended Leavitt Area High School in Turner in the 1970s and competed in girls track and field at a time when many girls sports programs were poor shadows of what was available for boys. To be fair, neither the boys or the girls track teams had adequate resources, but we both made do as best we could, often on a muddy dirt track and sometimes only bales of hay or sawdust to land on in the high jump pit. Despite these limitations, the girls' team practiced very hard and we took the competition very seriously. In the 1973 State championships, I was very proud to be one of four young women to win first place in the relay for our school.

I was very excited to compete at the college level when I went to the University of Maine at Orono but to my dismay I learned there was no school sanctioned women's track team but a loosely organized "club "sport was" in the works ". An enthusiastic member of the men's team volunteered to coach the women, but we could only compete in some AAU meets, while the men's team had two paid coaches and travelled all over the Northeast to compete with other large colleges. I sometimes felt sad at not having the same opportunity to compete at the same level as my boyfriend, and future husband, who was on the men's team.

It has taken many years but thankfully women's sports began approaching parity with men's sports at both the high school and collegiate level in Maine. This has happened based, to a large extent, on the enforcement of Title IX, violations of which threatened the violators with a loss of federal funds, but also based on the growing national acceptance of principles of fundamental fairness and equal treatment of males and females in the area of sports access and competition. Excellence in sports is not just about personal satisfaction and self-esteem, but is often used by students as a springboard to obtain scholarships at colleges and university, or jobs in coaching, and networking reasons.

It is very sad for me, as a Maine woman, to see decades of progress swept away by the MPA's adherence to Maine's distorted interpretation of Title IX and the unscientific and discriminatory language of the Maine Human Rights Act which allows males to compete against females in school sports. Such a policy is at odds with the clear intent of Title IX. While it is argued that only a handful of transgender males compete in Maine, it would only take four or five slightly better than average transgender boys to totally dominate almost all of girls track events at the state championship—one in the sprints, one in the jumps, one in the middle distances, one in the long distances and one in the weight events – and effectively put many state records permanently out of reach of girls.

Not only does this policy undermine women's athletics by allowing biological men to compete against women, but it also puts women at a much greater risk of injuries in team

sports from larger and stronger males. There have already been instances of this happening around the U. S.

Equally disturbing is the deafening silence of so-called woman's advocacy groups to this bizarre policy, which is not supported by the overwhelming majority of Mainers and is now rejected nationally by the NCAA in college sports.

While I appreciate Governor Mill's commitment to follow "the law" on this important issue, Maine's law needs to change along with the administration's misguided interpretation of federal law to protect both women's sports and women.

Hopefully, politicians will summon the courage to promote the will of the vast majority of Maine people, this discriminatory policy will become just another unfortunate footnote in Maine history.

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