

Selina Soule
Alliance Defending Freedom
LD 868

My name is Selina Soule. I am a former elite high school track and field athlete from Connecticut. Track was my passion as a little girl and I couldn't wait until I got to high school and could finally be a part of an organized track team. I spent countless hours training I could win—so I could be the best. However, my chances of being first – of being the best – were shattered.

During my 4 years of high school track and field in Connecticut, starting in 2017, I was forced to compete against two boys identifying as girls. In that time, these two male athletes won 15 women's state championship titles and broke 17 meet and state records. I raced against these athletes dozens of times throughout the years, and was never close to winning.

I remember what it was like to line up for a race and get into my blocks wanting to win, but I already knew the outcome long before the start of the race. Those two male athletes would dominate the field, and female athletes would be left to compete for third place and beyond. No matter how hard we trained and how far we pushed ourselves, they beat us time and time again. Even if we ran a personal best or broke a school record, it was never enough to get that gold medal.

I lost countless opportunities during my time as a high school athlete. I lost opportunities to compete on world class tracks. And I lost opportunities to win titles. During my junior year, I was denied the chance to compete at the New England Regional Championship. I missed advancing to the next level of competition in the 55-meter dash by just two spots—two spots that were taken by males. Because they were permitted to participate in a girl's division, I was forced to become a spectator in my own sport.

Even worse, female athletes throughout Connecticut and New England also missed out on chances to compete in front of college coaches and compete for college scholarships.

Each time those athletes qualified for New Englands, Maine girls were forced to compete against them. Not a single girl from Maine stood a chance to beat these boys, and get the placement they deserve.

At the 2019 Outdoor New Englands hosted by Thornton Academy in Saco, one of the males dominated the 200m and the 4x400m relay. The other male chose to scratch from all events and did not compete at the meet.

I worry how many college recruiters across the country will skip over the names of other female athletes and only look at the name at the top of those results—a name that belongs to a male athlete.

Boys will always have a physical advantage over us girls, and that is why we have women's sports in the first place. Males have bigger and stronger organs, more muscle mass and different skeletal structures which lead them to have a significant performance advantage compared to a woman.

Not only was it frustrating, heartbreaking, and demoralizing to know I could not win, it was even more concerning to see how it was affecting girl's track and field, and if changes are not made soon, we are facing the complete eradication of women's sports.

Female athletes deserve the same opportunity as boys to excel and chase our dreams. Allowing male athletes to compete in girls' sports shatters those dreams and strips away opportunities that so many of us have spent years working to obtain. Sports are about biology, not identity.

I encourage you to pass LD 868 because women's sports need to be protected and kept for women only. I don't want other girls to have to go through the same pain that I felt throughout my four years of high school. No one thinks it is fair, but everyone is afraid to speak out. They are afraid of retaliation from the media, kids at school, coaches, and other athletes. Many have been warned by school administrators to remain silent and not speak publicly on this issue. I am here today to speak for all of those girls and for the future of women's sports.

I urge you to pass LD 868 to guarantee girls in Maine a level playing field. Women fought long and hard to earn equal athletic opportunities. Women deserve the chance to win in their own sports, not just earn a participation trophy. You have the chance today to protect and save women's sports for every girl across the great state of Maine.