

National Collegiate Athletics Association
700 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46206

April 23, 2024

To the NCAA Board of Governors,

We, the undersigned members of the LGBTQI+ advocacy, gender justice, human rights, racial justice movements, and sporting communities, call on the Board of Governors to protect the freedom of transgender NCAA athletes to participate in the sports they love. Throughout the history of sport, we have seen girls and women, and Black and Brown athletes, systematically excluded under the guise of preserving a specific view of what an athlete should look like. To deny trans athletes the freedom to be their authentic selves and participate in the sport they love goes against the principles of Olympism: that sport is a human right and that sport is for all.

When Hall of Fame coach of the 2024 NCAA women's basketball champions, Dawn Staley – one of the trailblazers for all of women's sports – said that trans women should play, she understood the courage required to act in solidarity. Throughout history, we have seen that segregation and exclusion as policies have never reflected the true values of sport. It's not a surprise that as the legacy of racial discrimination is still felt palpably off the court in higher education, that on the court, anti-trans sports bans disproportionately impact Black and Brown transgender women, as we saw in the [lawsuit against Andraya Yearwood and Terri Miller in Connecticut](#).

Sport has the power to change lives for the better. Sport allows people to develop a sense of self and identity and to reflect what we value. Sport is a tremendous enabler of physical and mental health, teaches valuable lessons on teamwork and discipline, and brings lifelong community. Sport fosters deep friendships formed between both teammates and competitors that can last a lifetime. Every single student should have access to the lifesaving power of sports.

Within the context of broad legislative attacks on the rights of trans people in the United States, opposition to trans athletes is driven by certain politicians who seek to control our bodies, not by science or data. In denying trans youth the freedom to live authentically and to thrive in their schools, they are creating an environment in which all students face bullying and increased scrutiny. In states that have passed baseless laws banning trans students from school sports, [non-transgender teenaged players](#) also have been inaccurately and mercilessly targeted and harassed. States have passed [invasive](#) enforcement measures that endanger every student-athlete and hamper participation.

Studies used to justify the exclusion of transgender athletes are faulty and misinterpreted to further discrimination. There is simply no conclusive data to justify a ban of transgender

athletes. The [most current scientific review of transgender women in elite sport](#) was published in 2022 by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) and underscores that transgender athletes do not have an inherent advantage in sport. [Guidelines](#) from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), at the highest level of sport, reflect the same principle. As Team USA athlete and TransAthlete.com Founder Chris Mosier told [The Washington Post](#), “A policy change at this time, without a robust process of engaging experts, athletes, and people with lived experience, is solely based on political pressure.”

Anti-trans legislation is largely fueled by propaganda and deception. Media has framed former University of Kentucky swimmer [Riley Gaines](#) as the cisgender woman who lost a national championship race at the hands of the NCAA’s transgender athlete participation policies. In fact, she tied transgender woman [Lia Thomas](#) for 5th place at the 2022 NCAA National Championships. Four other women (all of whom are cisgender) also beat Gaines, preventing her from taking the podium. Lia Thomas was in full compliance of the NCAA’s policies. Anti-trans politicians, policymakers, and media at large have divisively used this narrative to incite transphobic hatred and policy, despite the [hundreds](#) of swimmers who have stated their support for transgender athletes, endorsing the expertise of medical, athletic, and human rights professionals who helped shape the IOC’s inclusive policy.

As the NCAA’s highest governing body and members of an organization supporting the wellbeing of not just athletes but sport itself, the focus should be on the long-documented needs of NCAA athletes of all genders and on developing better supports via [research, education, collaboration, and policy to promote a healthy and safe environment for all athletes](#), not on a manufactured political outrage campaign whose intention is to discriminate. We ask you to address the [documented threats](#) to women in sports, such as unequal pay, failure to uphold Title IX, sexual abuse and harassment, a [lack of equal resources](#) for men’s and women’s teams, and [quality control](#): all issues that are within the purview of the NCAA and the Board of Governors.

We know firsthand that sport has the power to change lives. Allowing transgender athletes within the NCAA to access the sports they love and work hard for alongside their teammates fulfills the true spirit of Olympism. We call on you to be on the right side of history and ensure there is a pathway to authentic participation for all athletes.

Signed,

Alliance For Full Acceptance

American Atheists

Arkansas Black Gay Men's Forum

Athlete Ally

Athletes for Impact

Athletes Unlimited

Campaign for Southern Equality

CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers

Education Law Center-PA

Equality California

Equality Delaware

Equality Federation

Equality Illinois

Equality Michigan

Equality New Mexico

Equality North Carolina

Equality Ohio

Equality Texas

Equality Virginia

EqualityMaine

Fair Wisconsin

Family Equality

Freedom Oklahoma

Garden State Equality

Gender Justice

Georgia Equality

GLAAD

GLSEN

Human Rights Campaign

Louisiana Trans Advocates

Massachusetts Transgender Political Organization

MassEquality

Movement Advancement Project

National Center for Transgender Equality

National LGBTQ Task Force

National Women's Law Center

none

One Colorado

OutFront Minnesota

PFLAG Athens Area

PFLAG Athens, TN

PFLAG Attleboro

PFLAG Austin

PFLAG Bucks County

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara

PFLAG Cape Cod

PFLAG Clayton-Concord

PFLAG Collingswood NJ

PFLAG Colorado Springs Chapter

PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois

PFLAG Dallas

PFLAG Danville / Central Susquehanna Valley

PFLAG Decatur, IL

PFLAG Dothan

PFLAG DuPage

PFLAG Enfield

PFLAG Enid Oklahoma

PFLAG Fairbanks Alaska

PFLAG Fort Collins

PFLAG Frederick

PFLAG Georgetown

PFLAG Grayslake / Round Lake

PFLAG Greater Boston

PFLAG Greater Orlando

PFLAG Greensburg

PFLAG Greenville NC

PFLAG Greenville SC

PFLAG Gulf Region

PFLAG Ithaca- Cortland

PFLAG Kansas City

PFLAG Lafayette

PFLAG Los Angeles

PFLAG Lower Columbia

PFLAG Madison

PFLAG Mt. Horeb

PFLAG National

PFLAG New Orleans Chapter, Inc

PFLAG NH

PFLAG Norman

PFLAG NYC

PFLAG Philadelphia

PFLAG Port Charlotte Chapter

PFLAG Prineville

PFLAG Robbinsville

PFLAG Salisbury

PFLAG Salisbury-Rowan

PFLAG San Diego County

PFLAG Sauk Valley

PFLAG Seattle

PFLAG Southern Pines

PFLAG Springfield/SWMO

PFLAG Sturgeon Bay/Door County

PFLAG Tulsa

PFLAG Wenatchee

PFLAG Whatcom

PFLAG Woodstock

PROMO Missouri

Silver State Equality

State Innovation Exchange (SIX)

The LGBT Center, New York City

The Trevor Project

Transathlete.com

Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT)

Transgender Law Center

Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF)

Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico

TransHarvard

TransOhio

UltraViolet

VOICEINSPORT Foundation