

## **Testimony of Selina Soule in Support of North Dakota HB 1298**

My name is Selina Soule. I write in support of HB 1298 and ask you to give a favorable recommendation to the bill.

I have been competing in track and field since my mom introduced me to it when I was a little girl. Track means everything to me. I would wake up every day and go through high school, just waiting to get to the track, waiting to run, waiting to jump. I spent countless hours training to shave even a few seconds off my time so I could win—so I could be the best. However, my chances of being first – of being the best – were shattered.

In 2017, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference began allowing boys who identify as girls to compete in girls' sports. As a result, during my 4 years of high school track and field in Connecticut, I was forced to compete against two biological boys identifying as girls. In that time, these two biological male athletes won 15 women's state championship titles in track and field, titles that were previously held by 9 different girls in 2016.

I remember what it was like to line up for a race and get into my blocks, but already knew the outcome long before the start of the race. Those two biological male athletes would dominate the field, and female athletes were left competing for third place and beyond. No matter how hard we trained and how far we pushed ourselves, they beat us time and time again. This isn't about self-expression, this is about our right – a woman's right – to win.

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.

Boys will always have a physical advantage over us girls, and that is why we have women's sports in the first place. Science and common sense show us that boys are, on average, stronger and faster than girls. That is why it is fundamentally unfair to let boys who identify as girls come in and dominate any sport.

I have lost countless opportunities over the past few years. 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 biological 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. I worry how many college recruiters, who only have a limited number of scholarships and slots on college track teams to award, 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 biological male athlete.

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.

I encourage you to give a favorable recommendation to HB 1298 because I don't want other girls to have to go through the same pain, frustration, and discouragement that I and many Connecticut and New England girls experienced for the past several years. No one thinks it is fair, but everyone is afraid of retaliation from the media, other kids at school, coaches, and other athletes. I'm just trying to make sure that young girls don't have to face the same pain that I felt throughout my four years of high school.

I urge you to give a favorable recommendation to HB 1298 to guarantee girls in North Dakota a level playing field. Women fought long and hard to earn equal athletic opportunities. You have the chance today to protect and save women's sports.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Selina Soule". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Selina Soule