Twitter Thread by Parker Molloy



Parker Molloy
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There are a number of reasons bills like these are wrongheaded. One is that it tries to implement the same kind of one-size-fits-all solution that opponents of trans inclusion claim to oppose.

But let's get nuanced for a minute...

> NEW: Hawaii Rep. @TulsiGabbard introduces bill called \u2018Protect Women\u2019s Sports Act\u2019 \u2014 would clarify Title IX protections to be based on biological sex, which would impact transgender athletes participating in athletic programs for women and girls @KITV4 pic.twitter.com/VcDDgO1mFL
>
> — Tom George (@TheTomGeorge) December 10, 2020

Do trans women and girls have an advantage in sports over other women and girls?

I'm here to provide a very unsatisfying answer: It depends.

What sport are we talking about?

How old are people competing in it?

What sort of hormone treatment has the person in question had and for how long?

Those are all factors that play into the fairness question.

Trying to implement broad policies in the name of ensuring fairness can actually have the opposite of the intended effect.

Take the case of Mack Beggs.

A few years back, Beggs was a high school student in Texas. He was a wrestler, and wanted to do it at the college level.

Beggs is a trans man, meaning his birth certificate said female on it. Like many trans guys, he takes testosterone as part of his medical transition.

He wanted to wrestle. Specifically, he wanted a spot on his school's boys team.

He wasn't allowed.

The rules that had been made at the state level said that because his birth certificate said female, he could only compete against girls.

Now, here's where you might go "wait, wait, isn't it unfair for someone taking testosterone to wrestle girls?" and the answer is yeah, it is.

So, he was faced with some tough choices, none of them good:

1. Don't wrestle at all

2. Wrestle against girls, keep taking testosterone, have an advantage

3. Wrestle against girls, stop taking testosterone even though it's something he, his family, his doctor see as necessary

Again, though, all he wanted to do was to wrestle against boys, which would have been the most level possible playing field and wouldn't require him to top taking hormones.

But he couldn't. Because of a blanket rule meant to ensure "fairness."

High school students shouldn't have to pick between medically necessary care or the ability to take part in activities at school, whether that's sports or marching band or AV club.

So, anyway, left with limited options that were all bad, Beggs wrestled in the girls division.

He dominated. Obviously. He won the state championship twice in a division he never wanted to compete in in the first place.

People said "Hey! That's unfair!"

And yes, it was. But it wasn't his fault. It was an anti-trans rule meant to ensure "fairness" that caused the unfairness.

Here's a story about him from this year. He's in college now:

https://t.co/sAdkUN6SgC

But those bills aren't aimed at trans guys like Beggs. The thought behind them as they get written and implemented is a concern that trans girls (whose birth certificates say male) will dominate sports/have an unfair advantage.

But as I said earlier, the question of "fairness" and level playing fields and all that is way more nuanced than many are willing to consider. https://t.co/qYnWNgtQDp

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If a trans girl never underwent her body's natural testosterone-fueled puberty, then it's ridiculous to say she has an advantage over other girls in any sport.

But if you're talking about someone who did go through puberty, went through a giant growth spurt to be 6'5" or something by junior year in high school and decided she wanted to play basketball her senior year, then yeah, that's pretty clearly unfair.

"You must play sports based on what it said on your birth certificate" isn't good policy, nor is a complete and total free for all.

It's a topic that often gets looked at with zero nuance. Bills like Gabbard's in the House or Loeffler's in the Senate look to codify zero nuance.

The NCAA and International Olympic Committee have both tried to find policies that look at this with more nuance, and they seem to be working, generally. It's not to say they're perfect, and if suddenly sports was overrun with trans women just racking up goals medals at...

... the Olympics, the IOC would be right to think "Okay, we need to recalibrate things a bit." But that hasn't happened. To the best of my knowledge, there haven't been any trans women who've even made their country's Olympic teams let alone won medals.

The "trans women will bring an end to women's sports entirely because they will dominate!" thing has been argued for decades.

Look, here's a 1976 letter to the editor sent to NYT: "women's sports will be taken over by a giant race of surgically created women."

44 years ago!

The New York Times

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1976

Another Category Needed—Others

To the Sports Editor:

Dr. Renee Richards is not really a woman. She cannot pass the chromosome test that women athletes must be able to pass to play in the Olympics and other tournaments.

If it is decided that Dr. Richards is truly a woman, then all those Russian female athletes who passed up Olympic competition because they couldn't pass the chromosome test will now be eligible to compete. Women's sports will be taken over by a giant race of surgically created women.

If Dr. Richards really wanted to live a quiet life in a new part of the country, she really should not have wanted to create such a spectacle of herself. Perhaps there should now be three categories for athletic competitions—female, male and others.

On the topic of “why don’t they create an ‘other’ category?” questions, I’ve found this helpful. https://t.co/8DnMT9QSDD

Before we continue, I want to address the question many readers have asked: *Why don't transgender athletes compete in their own category?*

Creating a separate category for transgender athletes effectively bans them from actual competition. In most sports, there are too few transgender athletes to comprise an entirely new division. In 2007 I wrote about Canadian downhill mountain biker Michelle Dumaresq, the sole transgender woman in the pro mountain bike scene at the time. She explained the argument against transgender category succinctly.

What's the point of racing against yourself? No matter if Dumaresq sped down the track in world-record time, or she crashed and walked to the bottom, she would earn first place and every race, week after week. At some point, those medals would carry no significance, and thus, the victories would not matter.

It’s a complex issue that doesn’t have a clear-cut one-size-fits-all answer, which is why Gabbard’s bill to strip federal funding for schools that accommodate trans student athletes is just messed up.

But, as I’ve said before: this isn’t actually about sports.

Gabbard knows her bill isn’t becoming law. She’s only in Congress for 3 more weeks. This is culturally conservative virtue signaling. Same with her sponsorship of the “born alive” bill and her mangled understanding of Section 230 reform.

Her bill won’t get a vote in the House, and the current session ends next month, making anything that doesn’t get a vote, make it through the senate, and get signed before then pretty much just a way to put on a show.

I’ve written a lot on the topic of trans people, athletes, media coverage, and I’d like to think that I approach the topic with necessary nuance while providing what personal insight I can.

Something I wrote for Vice in 2014: https://t.co/VsFjdDRtwn

And I’ve written about how the arguments that get made about trans athletes get used in media to attack intersex athletes https://t.co/wMPTGPbk1A

Every time... without fail... I get these replies... even after that long-ass thread.



S. K.
@dayalsoap

Replying to @ParkerMolloy

I mean, they're not wrong to say that a biological male will pretty much dominate females in sports. It's just a fact. Chromosomes should determine sport eligibility

9:47 AM · 12/11/20 · Twitter for Android