

Governor Charlie Baker
The National Collegiate Athletic Association
700 W. Washington Street
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Riley Gaines

Cell: (---) -----

January 5, 2023

Dear Governor Baker,

Congratulations on your appointment as president of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. My name is Riley Gaines, and I am a 2022 graduate of the University of Kentucky where I was a member of the Women's Swimming and Diving Team, the 2022 SEC Scholar-Athlete of the year, the 2022 Brad Davis SEC Community Service Leader of the Year, a 5x SEC Champion, and the SEC record holder in the 200 butterfly (making me one of the fastest female Americans of all-time in this event). These are accomplishments of which I will forever be proud, accomplishments that were only attainable as a result of my life-long dedication to swimming and endless hours of hard work and sacrifice. As a former impressive collegiate athlete yourself, you know this all too well.

I'm sure you're aware of the controversy surrounding our 2022 NCAA Swimming and Diving Championships, but my purpose in writing to you is to share with you details that you could not have gathered from the media.

In November of 2021, near the middle of my senior season, I was ranked 3rd in the nation in the 200 freestyle behind an amazing female athlete I was familiar with and one name I had not heard of, a student athlete from the University of Pennsylvania who had come out of nowhere senior year to post the fastest women's time in the nation in multiple events by multiple seconds.

Swimming is a sport measured down to the hundredth of a second, so when someone leads the nation by many seconds, it clearly generates attention within the swimming community, as this is almost unheard of. This anomaly didn't make sense to me until I read an article clarifying that this athlete, Lia Thomas, had formerly competed on the UPenn men's team as Will Thomas.

I was shocked, but I was actually relieved when this information was disclosed. I thought to myself it would not matter come March because there was no way the NCAA would allow Thomas to compete at the women's national championships. I was proven very wrong 3 weeks before the start of the meet when the NCAA announced that Thomas would, in fact, be allowed to compete with the women.

On the first day of our NCAA championships, we sat on the pool deck and watched Lia Thomas beat every female in the country (including Olympians and American record holders) to win a national title in the 500 freestyle.



The next day, Lia and I raced in the 200 yard freestyle. To my surprise, we actually ended up tying. Upon our tie, we went behind the podium, which is where the top 8 finishers are awarded their trophies and then paraded out in front of everyone for recognition as it's a huge accomplishment to become an All-American. The NCAA official handing out the trophies informed me that they had not accounted for ties (which are rare), so Lia would take the trophy home and I would be mailed one. He then further informed me that Lia would hold the trophy for photo purposes. As you can imagine, I was devastated. I felt marginalized, belittled, and excluded from proper recognition in this event.

My face in this photo says it all:



What these photos do not tell you is that the female athletes who were forced to compete against Lia Thomas were also forced to share a locker room with Lia Thomas, who still had male genitalia. To be clear: we did not consent to this arrangement. If nothing else, I truly hope you can see how this is a violation of our right to privacy and how some of us have felt awkward, embarrassed, or even traumatized by the experience.

Although I can't speak for everyone who competed against Lia Thomas, I can attest to the tears that I witnessed from finishers who missed being named an All-American by one place. I can attest to the extreme discomfort in the locker room from 18-year-old girls exposed to male genitalia in our changing spaces. I can attest to the anger and frustration expressed by girls who had worked so hard and sacrificed so much to get to this moment only to have to compete in a farce. And I can attest to the fact that, around the country, female athletes who protested the inclusion of Lia Thomas in the women's division were threatened, intimidated, and emotionally blackmailed into silence and submission. I can attest to the fact that female athletes in the Ivy League were told that if they are uncomfortable seeing male genitalia in the locker room, then they should seek counseling from university resources including the LGBTQ+ education center.

Let me be clear, I am not against providing trans-athletes a space to compete. I fully believe there is a solution that can accommodate trans-identifying individuals without compromising equal opportunity or privacy for female athletes. I have recently started working with Independent Women's Forum to actively work towards pushing legislature at the state and federal level that enforces an appropriate solution prioritizing fairness in women's sports all while being inclusive.

Governor Baker, I know that you have a reputation for fairness and for considering all viewpoints. I also know that you have a daughter who is about my age and played sports in high school. I sincerely hope, therefore, that as you prepare for your new role at the NCAA, you will take the time to hear from the growing number of female athletes who have been hurt, traumatized, or excluded by policies that claim to promote inclusion. And I hope that you will familiarize yourself with the scientific evidence that shows the impossibility of leveling the collegiate playing field through hormone therapy.

Enclosed is a report that summarizes the scientific literature on the male-female athletic gap and shares the stories of several female athletes like me. I hope you find it helpful, and I hope to be able to meet with you face-to-face so that I can share more of my experience with you and continue the conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Riley Gaines". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Riley Gaines