



**Testimony before the House Judiciary
Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government
"The Dangers and Due Process Violations of 'Gender-Affirming Care' for
Children"**

**Paula Scanlan
Spokeswoman & Advisor
Independent Women's Forum
July 27, 2023**

Good morning Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Scanlon and members of the subcommittee. I'm Paula Scanlan, a spokeswoman and advisor for the Independent Women's Forum and a former NCAA athlete. I am here today to share my personal story.

I started swimming at a very young age, by age 8 I was swimming competitively, and by late middle school I was devoting at least 20 hours per week to swimming. I gave up countless Christmas holidays, weekends, and social events to work towards my goal of swimming Division 1. A dream that came true when I began swimming for the University of Pennsylvania. While I am not an NCAA champion, I hold the New England Independent School League Record in the 400-yard freestyle relay, a record that has stood since March of 2017.

In September 2021, Lia Thomas began participating as a member of the Penn Women's Team. Lia, formerly Will, had personal best times in every freestyle event that were faster than the Women's world records. Once the season began, Thomas was leading the country in multiple events while placing only top 500 in one of those events on the men's team. Thomas later became an NCAA Champion in the 500-yard freestyle, the first NCAA champion in our women's team program history.



While many of you already know this, what you do not know is the experiences of the women on the University of Pennsylvania swim team.

My teammates and I were forced to undress in the presence of Lia, a six-foot four-inch tall biological man fully-intact with male genitalia, 18 times per week. Some girls opted to change in bathroom stalls and others used the family bathroom to avoid this. When we tried to voice our concern to the Athletic Department, we were told that Lia swimming and being in our locker room was non-negotiable and we were offered psychological services to attempt to re-educate us to become comfortable with the idea of undressing in front of a male.

To sum up the university's response: we, the women, were the problem, not the victims. We were expected to conform—to move over and shut up. Our feelings didn't matter. The university was gaslighting and fear-mongering women to validate the feelings and identity of a male.

As an attempt to voice my concerns about the situation we were forced into—revealing the unfair and unjust treatment—I wrote an Op-Ed for Daily Pennsylvanian, the University of Pennsylvania student-run newspaper. I approached this from a scientific, statistical perspective where I used my engineering background to discuss how Y-chromosomes cannot be changed by any surgical procedure or systemic therapy. This biological fact lends itself to athletic advantages that cannot be mitigated by lowering testosterone levels, which are readily apparent in sports competitions and locker rooms.

The DP published my article on the evening of February 10, 2022. Only a few hours later my piece was retracted. I was given no notice, nor reasoning. Again, I was silenced for my dissenting viewpoint, and felt my First Amendment Rights were denied by my university.

This is representative of a greater issue, the destruction of free speech. Today any discussion of maintaining the sanctity of women's spaces is labeled transphobic, bigoted, and hateful.



What's bigoted and hateful is the discrimination against women and the efforts to erase women and our equal opportunities, dignity, and safe spaces.

One may ask, why do I speak so passionately about issues that seem hypothetical or that some may perceive as impacting only a small number of women? This is not hypothetical, this is real. I know women who have lost roster spots and spots on the podium. I know of women with sexual trauma who are adversely impacted by having biological males in their locker room without their consent.

And I am one of these women. I was sexually assaulted on June 3, 2016, in a bathroom.

I was able to forgive my attacker, but violence against women still exists. Let us not forget the viral #MeToo movement that empowered female victims to speak up; it cast a spotlight on the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and abuse, including in scholarly and educational institutions. Individuals on this committee have stated, "Violence against women is all too common."

I am extremely grateful for those members who have brought awareness to violence against women in the past, but unfortunately, there is still much to be done. As a sexual assault survivor, many policies pushed today completely ignore my experiences and many women like me.

I ask members of this committee, please consider this issue outside the lens of political affiliations and understand the true impact of ignoring the realities of womanhood. Future generations depend on us.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.